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Pope Benedict weathers Muslim wrath

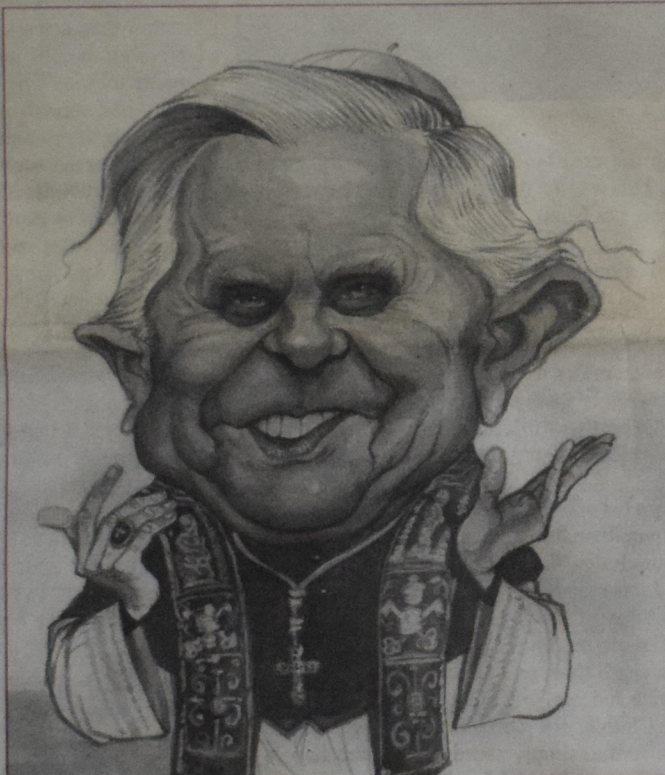
Harry der Nederlanden

The furor in the Islamic world aroused by the Pope's words has at last begun to abate, and the Vatican has arranged for a dialogue between the pontiff and Islamic leaders. Pope Benedict never actually apologized for the remarks attributed to him. There was no need. They were the words of someone he quoted: they were not his own sentiments. He expressed regret that his speech delivered at the University in Regensburg, Germany served as an occasion for violence and bloodshed, but he insisted that the words referring to Islam as "evil and inhuman" were a quote taken out of context.

Harsh, and in some places violent, reaction came not just from fundamentalist fanatics but also from moderate Islamic leaders, government leaders as well as clerics. While some moderates were quick to accept the Pope's apology, others called for his head, dismissing the apology as inadequate. The vehement reaction reveals the heart of Islam: any denigration of Muhammed or the teachings of Islam must be forbidden, not just to Muslims, but to people of other faiths as well.

The statement published around the world was a 14th century quote from Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus. After quoting the emperor's remark that Islam brought only evil and inhuman things into the world, the Pope pointed out that they were the emperor's own record of the debate with a Persian sage, and he went on to quote the Quran as saying exactly the opposite of what the emperor alleged.

Usually academic addresses do not attract journalists. They are generally far too abstract



and complex to be reduced to a newsbyte. But some journalist must have seen a chance to stir up a little dust, and the headlines that went out suggested that the Pope had denigrated Islam and dishonored Muhammed. This was quickly followed by news stories from around the world reporting violent Muslim reactions, denunciations of the Pope, and a few days later speculations on whether the Pope's apology was adequate.

In Rome anxiety was high and security stepped up after threats were issued in reaction to the Pope's speech. According to a Zenit report from Rome, the average Roman didn't blame Islamists or extremists for the threat of violence, but they blamed the Pope for not choosing his words more

carefully. They said, "He shouldn't have provoked them."

"What kind of world are we living in," asked Elizabeth Lev of Zenit, "when we cannot engage in civil discourse, even on hotly contested points, without knee-jerk recourse to violence? More importantly, how can we blame the Pope as if his words 'caused' the violence, or as if there were any proportion between his words and the unconscionable actions that followed?"

Indignation was not confined to the Muslim world or to frightened Romans, however. Many Western newspapers editorialized on the lack of tact or judgment displayed by "God's Rottweiler" ("God's Rottweiler shows his teeth"

What was the Pope's speech about?

Pope Benedict's speech at Regensburg University, contrary to all appearances, was not first of all about Islam. It addressed the relationship between religion and reason. Much of the scholarly address was devoted to explaining how the two came to be torn apart. This happened under a process called "dehellenization."

As the Pope sees it, by the providence of God, Christianity and Christian theology developed under the influence of Greek thinking. This resulted in a happy balance between Religion and Reason. Many of the ills we now see around us, particularly the resort to violence to suppress those of other convictions, flow from the unraveling of this alliance between faith and reason.

Benedict is anxious to show that secular reason, reason divorced from religion, has bad consequences for culture and for life as a whole. But religion divorced from reason also brings conflict and disintegration.

In his address he actually faults the Reformation for causing this unravelling. It argued that God is not bound to reason but that he is absolute and thus able to define what is reasonable, said the Pope. It also stressed *sola scriptura*, rejecting the indispensable role of reason.

The 19th and 20th centuries saw religion increasingly defined as outside the bounds of reason,

so that it was no longer possible to reason about the truths of religion.

At present, the West is falling under the spell of postmodernism, which the Pope sees as a form of irrationalism. There is no longer a single Truth to which all must submit or a common Reason by which to discover Truth.

This makes dialogue impossible and causes us to resort to force. For people of different cultures and faiths to get along and to cooperate, they must be able to sit down as rational creatures and appeal to common ideas.

So the point of the Pope's speech was that people of faith must affirm a God who affirms the goodness of human reason. Only by this route will we avoid violence.

The main purpose of his speech was to issue a warning to a Europe that is fast losing not only its faith in God but also its trust in reason. This leaves it unable to defend itself and to ground its traditions and institutions.

The Pope, of course, errs in his description of the Reformation. Although it rejected reason as something independent from God, and insisted that it too was marred by sin, it held that God was faithful to the order that he created. So the Reformation did not jettison reason.

– *Guardian*). They expostulated that this was no time to revive Medieval animosities.

Karen Armstrong, a prolific writer on things religious, inveighed against the Pope,

speaking of his "Medieval cast of mind." She charged that he quoted "without qualification and with apparent approval" the words that sparked such outrage

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News

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among Muslims. She went on to denounce the "hatred of Islam...so ubiquitous and so deeply rooted in Western culture." She could not resist, of course, invoking the Crusades, even declaring that Islam became known as "the religion of the sword" because Christians had launched "brutal holy wars" against Muslims in the Middle East. And why had the Medieval popes condemned Islam? Because it was false? No, said Armstrong, but because it gave "too much respect to women and other menials." That's quite a stretch.

Another article in the *Guardian*, titled "Back to the Dark Ages," accused the Pope of arrogance and of "having little sympathy or imagination for other religions." The article went on to point out that for Muslims "protecting the honor of Muhammed is non-negotiable." (So who is lacking in sympathy for other religions?) The implication is that the rest of the world, including other religions with truth-claims that clash with those of Islam, must nevertheless refrain from criticism.

As a number of Pope defenders pointed out, this is tantamount to imposing a version of *sharia* (Islamic law) on everyone else.

Many editorials called for the Pope to apologize. *The New York Times* upbraided the Pope for "fomenting discord between Christians and Muslims," and it charged that he was more interested in enforcing doctrinal uniformity than in fostering tolerance and dialogue. "He needs to offer a deep and persuasive apology," the editorial concluded.

After the apology was issued, of course, for several days journalist kept asking, Is it a genuine apology? Is it adequate? Is it acceptable to Muslims? Should the Pope have another go at it?

Even balanced television news programs like the Lehrer Newshour kept referring to "the Pope's remarks linking Islam and violence." To those viewers who didn't read further this certainly conveyed the impression that the Pope had made a speech accusing Islam of being violent.

An article in *The Economist* observed that "Until now the Vatican has been remarkably successful in ensuring that, even if some sort of 'clash of civilizations' is in progress, it need not turn into a clash of religion." The Pope's remarks, however, threaten to blur the carefully nurtured distinction between Islamic terrorists and Islam itself by alluding to "holy war."

The article went on to suggest that the Pope is interested in prodding Islam to a more honest dialogue than has been forthcoming. The Vatican no longer wishes to overlook the fact that Christians in Muslim countries are not accorded the same freedoms as Muslims in the West – in fact, they are second-class citizens, frequently subjected to persecution and injustice. Moreover, even non-militant clerics often seem to sanction violence and intimidation in the name of religion.

A long article in *MacLean's* (Oct.2), while far from being a simplistic bash-the-pope piece, does depict him as being on a "Crusade" (a poor choice of words in an article that suggests the Pope's choice of words was unwise, if not stupid). But the article is accurate in pointing out that the Pope is aggressively asserting the (historical) role of



Pope meeting students

Christianity in the creation of Europe's identity, culture and freedoms. This was the focus of the Pope's Regensburg address: Europe, not Islam.

To many observers in the West, the Muslim reaction to the suggestion that Islam is a violent religion – by launching violent demonstrations and calling for the Pope's death – is ironic, if not humorous. It only confirms the charge.

Charles Krauthammer, a conservative columnist, writes: "'How dare you say Islam is a violent religion? I'll kill you for it!' is not the best way to go about refuting the charge. But of course, refuting is not the point here. The point is intimidation."

He draws up a list of other instances of such intimidation, including Salman Rushdie and the Danish cartoons, among others. He concludes that the intimidation works, as politicians and journalists and clergy hasten to placate the offended sensibility of Muslims.

Most Muslim clerics, on the other hand, Krauthammer points out, exercise little or no self-restraint or civility when they characterize Judaism or Christianity.

Neither the Church, nor journalists and governments in the West can afford to simply accede to Muslim standards about how to describe their religion, their prophet Muhammed or their scripture, the Quran. That is not showing respect; that is simply showing fear. And such discussion and critique goes on in many places on a regular basis. Do Muslims around the world really think Christian leaders should refrain from stating their differences with Islam? Do they really expect everyone in the West to show the same reverence over toward Muhammed as they do?

How to respond to Islam

The well-known Reformed pastor and theologian, John Piper wrote an article titled, "How Christians should respond to Muslim outrage at the Pope's Regensburg message about violence and reason." Among his suggestions:

- Admit that the Christian church has often been too entangled with civil governments, with the result that violence has been endorsed by the church as a way of accomplishing religious, and not just civil, goals. The Crusades, for example, stand as a monument to collective Christian blindness to the teaching of Jesus. We should make every effort today to avoid political alignments between the Christian church and any civil government or political party.
- Make clear that the use of God-sanctioned violence between Israel and the nations in the Old Testament is no longer God's will for his people. The coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as a suffering servant, rather than a warlord, and his gathering of a people from all nations rather than only one, are two of the many reasons why the Christian church today should not – and almost universally does not – endorse or use violence to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Admit that there are many Muslims today who do not approve of violence in the spread of Islam. Admittedly, to many of us in the West, their number seems small and their voice seems muted by the reputation of the more violent strains of Islam.
- Point out how Islam, in its most sacred writings and authoritative teachings, belittles Jesus Christ, not just occasionally in the news, but constantly by its dominant claims. Islam denies that Jesus Christ was and is God, a central truth of the Christian church.
- Point out that, in response to this constant "defamation" of Jesus Christ, there are no public threats or demands for apologies, not out of lack of zeal but because he is our model.
- Seek to win others to saving faith in Jesus by persuading with words, not imposing with force.
- Always be ready to die, but never to kill, for the sake of commending Jesus Christ as the Son of God who died for sinners and rose again as the Lord of the universe.



Politics

U.N. force in Lebanon unsure of mission

The forces appointed by the U.N. to oversee the peace along the Israeli-Lebanon border are now taking up their positions. Some 5,000 troops are now in place, 1,000 recently arriving from Italy. According to the New York Times, the mission of the UN troops is defined more in terms of what they may not do than in terms of what they're charged to do.

They may not set up checkpoints, search cars or buildings, or detain suspects. Any action of this kind must first be authorized by the Lebanese army. But so far neither the U.N. nor the Lebanese army has granted them any such authority.

This force is better equipped than the previous mission, but for what? Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader, has reiterated his position that his men will not surrender their arms. And the Lebanese Prime Minister has indicated that any attempt to do so by force would only result in a civil war that would destroy his country.

The main function of the U.N. troops seems to be to permit the withdrawal of Israeli troops from their positions inside Lebanon.

While the U.N. resolution called for 15,000 troops to reinforce a contingent of 15,000 Lebanese troops in the south, according to the N.Y. Times, a U.N. spokesman said the force would likely never approach anywhere near that level.

Sweden shifts – or perhaps leans – rightward

Sweden is frequently cited as Europe's model socialist state, and it has been governed from the left for 65 of its last 74 years. So the victory of a center-left coalition in the September 17 elections has been touted as a minor revolution. One commentator in the U.K. said that the fall of the Social Democrats "reverberated around Europe."

The winning coalition is comprised of Liberals, Christian Democrats and the Center Party. It won by a slim margin of 2 percent.

Frederik Reinfeldt, the young leader of the "New Moderates," has promised tax cuts to boost business and create more jobs. But he's hardly an American-style right winger, for he has also promised not to dismantle

Sweden's generous welfare state. Swedes pay some of the highest taxes in the world – from 30 to 55 percent of their income. A whopping 16 percent goes to pay for sick leave, and not because Swedes are unusually unhealthy. About 30 percent of Swedes are employed by the government.

Sweden has long combined a capitalist economy with a very comprehensive social safety net. It has served as a model to leftist parties around the world. Many Swedes, however, seem to think that too many are becoming overly reliant on government largesse.

Reinfeldt won on a platform that promised to make moderate cuts in welfare "to make it more interesting for people to get a job." Since the Swedish economy is strong, with a growth

of over five percent and an overall unemployment rate of about six percent, analysts are asking why the voters abandoned the Social Democrats. They point out that the official unemployment rate is deceiving, for unemployment among youth is about three times the average. The immigrant community in Sweden has grown to about 10 percent of the population; they are not integrating well and the unemployment rate for them is also abysmally high. Several members of the Social Democrats have also been involved in minor scandals, tarnishing the image of the party.

Sweden's answer to Britain's palace guards



Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done

Any mention of the mixture of prayer and politics, especially within the North American context, is likely to draw the ire of many. Some will say that prayer – or anything to do with religion for that matter – should mix with politics like oil mixes with water: not at all. Others will say that prayer should be integral to politics. Others will throw up their hands in despair, not knowing where to stand, or kneel, on the matter.

In this issue we're going to take a rest from our retro world tour and spend a bit of time discussing prayer and politics. My concern in this column will not be on the propriety or impropriety of public prayer, nor will we dwell on the broader question of how religion and politics should relate to one another. Instead, we'll spend some time on how Christians can pray for politics in Canada, and indeed the world.

The impetus for this column comes from a friend of mine from church who asked if I would write a list of ten things which she could pray for with regard to Canadian politics. What struck me about this request was not the difficulty of coming up with just ten things to pray about – certainly not an easy task – but the very nature of the request. What such a request recognizes is that politics, like ourselves, is upheld by our Lord, and as such requires our prayers. Our expectation that the Lord will uphold politics should compel us to pray for politics – and indeed the Bible asks us to as well.

Some might say that even if we take this command seriously that prayer for politics is bound to lead to difficulties. One example that is often used to showcase the difficulties of Christians praying about politics is the situation surrounding a naval battle between the English and the Spanish in 1588. Both sides claimed to have God on their side, and both sides said prayers for victory – indeed the pope at the time issued an encyclical against Elizabeth. Still, one side won, the other did not.

Nowadays, people will point to common political controversies that divide the church: positions on the war in Iraq or our differing perspectives on how



Principalities & Powers

Brian Dijkema

our governments should react to poverty. Some will suggest that these differences show the uselessness of prayer about politics. Others will simply suggest that when it comes to praying for politics, it is the political agenda that takes the fore, and not a desire to see God's will done.

And therein lies the rub. Prayer that is primarily concerned with advancing a political agenda and which is divorced from discernment as to what God's will for politics is, does not mimic how Christ taught us how to pray.

Of course this doesn't mean we should avoid praying for specific agendas, simply that our prayers should centre around a desire to see God's will done in politics, and a desire to increase in the knowledge of God's will. Searching the scriptures, searching the church's teachings and, of course, prayer itself are good places to begin when wondering about what God intended and requires for politics.

I suppose at this point, it is obvious that I am not going to be able to offer a complete political prayer list in the amount of space which I have left. Perhaps I can offer such a list in my last column. For now, I will simply leave you with the beginning of a powerful prayer from scripture which offers insight into how we should pray for politics. It is a prayer with which citizens of Canada should be familiar:

*Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to a king's son.
May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.
May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.
May he live while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.*
Psalm 72:1-5

Brian Dijkema works for the Christian Labour Association of Canada and studies political theory at the Institute for Christian Studies.

Although Sweden's large corporations are doing well, the highly regulated economy is not conducive to self-employment and make it hard to begin new businesses or sustain small ones. Reinfeldt has promised to change that and to introduce more privatization. Swedish

businessmen celebrated after the elections and the Stockholm stock market rose – moderately.

Although the new government represents a shift to the right in Sweden, it hardly represents a rejection of socialism.

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Editorial

Power politics and story-telling

Harry der Nederlanden

The office of editor invests me with great power – much of it illusory, of course. But writers often fume about the power of editors. Editors reject articles that the writer is sure embody just the sort of wisdom that the Preacher of Ecclesiastes calls for (see Van Ruler p. 14), or they alter words and sentences that he sweated over and finally got just right.

But authors often forget that they too exercise huge power. They create characters and events in just a few sentences. Sometimes they create, as it were out of nothing but imagination, but often they write about real historical events and personages. It isn't fiction – yet even in describing or invoking real events they draw on imagination and understanding, and they interpret and cobble together the reports of others to represent reality to readers.

Last issue, for example, I wrote about a visit my wife Rose and I made to Calvin. It was rooted in an actual event – but it should have been obvious to any reader that I was playing fast and loose with actuality. Rose and I both became semi-fictional characters in what was a highly embroidered account of an actual visit. It was pretty close to being fiction.

But reporters and historians constantly use their imaginations to recreate events, while working hard to get it right. Nevertheless, they often arrogate to themselves a great degree of creativity. It's a bit of a paradox. If they don't employ all kinds of artifice, the tricks of the trade, the evocative powers of language, metaphors and narrative structures, they are not be able to represent the truth to us in as full-bodied a form as they do.

When filmmakers create docudramas, that is, movies about actual people and events, these almost always spark debates about how accurate they really are. A recent docudrama depicting events leading up to 9-11, for example, earned Bill Clinton's indignation. He claimed that it misrepresented the role he and his administration played. He and many others were quite sure that this was deliberate distortion by the filmmakers, who were no doubt Republicans.

A docudrama on the life of Tommy Douglas that was shown on television a few months ago was criticized for

its depiction of one of the minor characters. In order to set off some character traits of Douglas, they needed a villainous type, so pressured by the requirements of the story, they turned a perfectly honest fellow into a backstabber. When you create a villain out of nothing, no one objects, but in this case those who knew the man objected vigorously that his good name was being sullied. The writers admitted that they had no interest in accurately portraying the man in question; they were focused on bringing out the truth of Tommy Douglas.

Writers and filmmakers employ the resources of their media both consciously and unconsciously to set up scenes in ways that allow certain truths to appear. Sometimes the fashioning is obvious and crude as in the Douglas docudrama, sometimes, when wielded by better artists, it is more subtle and nuanced.

When I was in high school, a public school, my history teacher had a virulent dislike for the Reformation, especially for John Calvin and Calvinism. He was a good teacher with a knack for making history interesting. His jaundiced view of Calvin first made me aware of how much history could be slanted. Of course, coming from a Christian Reformed home with several books on Calvinism on the bookshelf – and having written an essay on Calvin for Young People's Society – I had my own biases. To clarify my own tradition over against the bias of my teacher, I turned to books on Calvinism by Reformed authors, who, of course, tended to give me Calvin without the warts and wrinkles.

Later that semester came the French Revolution, which our teacher naturally related as a victory of reason and the common man over the Ancient Regime. With the other students I cheered for the masses storming the Bastille and imagined myself among those bold enough to fight for freedom and democracy. Down with Kings and Nobles – parasites all!

But I was also beginning to learn a little about Groen van Prinsterer, Kuyper and the Antirevolutionary Party. What was this – were we as Calvinists supposed to side with the decadent nobility ("Let them eat cake!") against the poor, hard-working men and women who only longed for freedom and justice? I wasn't at all sure I wanted to be an Antirevolutionary.

This was the route by which I as a young student was introduced to the politics of truth – and the truth of politics. Every one of us is constantly, especially in this age of the media, being drawn into various stories relating to past events, current news and even to visions of the future. Various plots and characters and settings are constantly sketched to frame our understanding of where we've been, where we are now and where we're going. It's an attempt to make a certain truth appear – to identify who we are and what we're supposed to be doing.

The Gospel as God's revelation of Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom is a truth that thrusts us right into the middle of this politics, this contention about what is the big story and who are the main characters. Since each of us sees only dimly and in part, this is an enterprise that requires interaction and contention and dialogue with others. Our opponents are often a great help, forcing us to see things we missed and to make corrections – sometimes even wholesale retractions.

As Van Ruler's meditation in this issue stresses, sometimes it becomes a shouting match, and wisdom is buried. Sometimes it devolves into a bare-knuckle brawl, and we need policemen and soldiers to keep the peace.

In the crudest version of postmodernism on the market

today, there is no access to a shared, calm space where we can quietly talk together. Reason is only another big stick used by the privileged to bully others into submission with a phony story about it being "universal," that is, a wholly unbiased story that transcends the conflict of interpretations.

The Pope is right – at least partly – that the Reformation and we Calvinists, right down to the present, helped to undermine that princely role of reason. The Reformers thought that it tantamount to installing (Greek) Reason as a kind of semi-divine mediator. In his speech the Pope alludes to the Logos of John, implying that Christ is sort of an embodiment of Reason. The Reformers thought such speculation unbiblical and rejected it. But they didn't thereby toss out the baby with the bathwater and leave us a creation ruled by whim and caprice, a world without an overarching order in which we are forced to generate our own little orderly spaces, our own "clean, well-lit places." Our God, they emphasized, is a faithful covenant God: he gave us an order, not just in nature but also in history – he gave us orders. And he upholds, blesses and goes with it to make visible the victorious Truth of his Kingdom – but only fully at the end.

Despite differences, the Pope shares this vision. He is concerned about the Western abandonment of a common reason – it has largely bought into the story that reason is always and inescapably a tool of power – and about the European Union's erasure of its Christian roots. He is warning us that, having largely abandoned any rooting of its culture in Reason or Religion, Europe is now left defenseless against Islam.

Meanwhile, Islam (like Protestants?) doesn't have the "tools" to engage other religions or worldviews in peaceful, rational dialogue because Allah is a absolute and above reason. What does that augur for the future? How can Europe dialogue with Islam? Is the only option left intimidation and force? Like Harry Antonides, the Pope has been deeply preoccupied with this unfolding story.

There are other big stories that compete for our attention, of course. Global warming and the environment are now right on the forefront. Others see as the defining reality of our era the impact of globalization and the spread of the [American] Empire, driven by faith in technology and the free market. There are still those who cling to the spread of freedom and democracy. Others pursue other stories of liberation, seeking to refashion the story of a God who is our Father and our King into that of the Mother Goddess (a form of paganism).

Bert Witvoet writes eloquently about the politicization of truth in his Reflections. I agree with what he says, but I would put it in a different way. When we as God's people engage with the world, the truth that gives us our identity and purpose must become politicized, or at least political. Jesus poured out the power of God in us with his Spirit: he empowered us. To "evangelize" is to enter into this battleground of ideas and stories.

But because we know who is writing the Big Story – the Author of all – we can defer the victory to him. We need not resort to brute force. We need only invoke, image forth, point to, imagine and proclaim the power of the now and coming Kingdom. What we need is not less politics, but more and better politics, the politics of the Kingdom.

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Faith

Reconciliation + Change = Peace

Richard Oostra

Change will only come into our lives if we are willing to be honest with ourselves. This honesty can involve our health, wealth or relationships, i.e. it can involve our self, our status or others around us.

Change actually begins when we ask honest questions such as: "If I were to live another twenty years, where would I be?" The answer to this is that you'll be exactly where you are today unless you are willing to take steps towards change.

Change towards good always begins with God. He will not allow a desire towards improvement to come up within us without also giving us the needed help to accomplish this. Children show this in the futuristic games they play and adults in the dreams and goals they have.

Most people, however, are afraid of change, especially when this change involves some form of reconciliation. They'd rather go on living in misery or disharmony than to admit to a need of reconciliation.

Reconciliation can be spiritual as well as relational. Jesus, for example, offers us a reconciled relationship to God. But after we have received this, he also requires believers to seek to live in a restored relationship with each other.

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21).

Seeking peace and restoration gives glory to God. The Bible says:

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgive each other just as in Christ God forgave you (Eph 4:32).

Forgiveness begins by being forgiven

When Christ's love fills our hearts and we know that we have been forgiven, only then does it become possible to forgive others. Forgiveness is then an act of gratitude for what we received.

When Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive his brother, Jesus' reply was that unless we continually forgive others God cannot forgive us our sins.

In the parable of the unmerciful servant Jesus said:

Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you? (Matt 18:33)

And when Jesus taught us to pray it was: *Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sinned against us (Matt 6:12).*

Humility, the first step

Seeking restoration requires first of all the humility on the part of the person who has Christ's Spirit in him – even though he may feel the least guilty. The Bible speaks of first getting the log out of your own eye before you seek to remove the splinter out of your brother's eye. (Matt 7:4)

Instead of blaming the other for conflict or refusing to admit to a need for correction, we must ask for God's love and in all humility take a sinner's attitude to contribute towards a better relationship.

We are more often like those inmates in the penitentiary who will not admit any wrongdoing. Some are instead studying law or writing a book to someday prove their innocence. But this was not Christ's way.

Asking help from others

Seeking restoration can be a high priority spiritual task and must be approached not just in the flesh but with the prayer and with the input of other believers. The offense for which you seek restoration in might be small in your own eyes but it may have caused someone else to stumble or to become embittered. Remember that our bible verse said, "if possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Jesus even added to this by saying:

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God" (Matt 5:9).

Yes, the offense may seem insignificant, but in love we must seek to restore this situation because we may have caused others to be offended. As the Bible says:

Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins (James 5:20).

The Way is love

Love is patient and kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not seeking self, it is not easily angered, it records no wrongs.... Love always protects trusts and hopes (1 Cor 13:1-7).

Restoration never begins by "discussing the conflict" but rather by humbly willing to be assumed wrong – even if one may not feel wrong – but by being the least.

Restoration begins by seeing the conflict from the other person's perspective. By being willing to give up one's own rights. It is following Jesus, who took upon himself the sins of others. And what does he ask of us?

A new command I give you. Love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another (John 13:34).

Restoration also begins by having learned to forgive yourself of sins you have confessed to God. If we know that God has forgiven us, we have no business remembering them. But we must at all times remember that he who has been forgiven much should also be most eager and generous in forgiving others (Luke 7:47).

God had an answer

Instead of letting relationships wither, we must actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation by forgiving others as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. Seeking a restored relationship is what God through

Christ did for us.

When God forgives he also forgets and so must we.

I will forgive...and remember their sins no more (Jer 31:34).

As far as the East is from the West, so far has he removed our transgressions from us (Ps 103:12).

Jesus sets the example

When we come to Christ for forgiveness we are not asked to negotiate nor discuss the offenses but merely to confess them. The forgiveness Jesus gives us is not based on litigation or arbitration but upon love. Jesus was our example when he took a towel and washed each of his disciple's feet and uttered these astonishing words:

Now that I am your Lord and Teacher and have washed your feet, you should also wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you (John 13:14,15).

This shows us that forgiveness must begin with humility by the one who considers himself more spiritual. The apostle Paul also mentioned this when he wrote:

...you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Gal 6:1).

Benefits of forgiveness

The benefits of forgiveness are many: It bestows God's blessing.

How good it is when brothers live

together in unity...for there the Lord bestows his blessing (Ps 133).

It is a testimony to Christ's power.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" wrote the apostle Paul and he continued saying, "Forgetting what is behind, I press forward to what lies ahead toward the goal of our high calling we have in Christ (Phil 3:14).

It brings better health.

Medical science has proven that many health problems lie within the human emotional and nervous system. Stored up anger, frustration, fear and an unforgiving spirit will cause indescribable damage to body functioning.

It deepens your relationship to God.

Grieve not the spirit of God, the Bible tells us. The Holy Spirit has been promised to those who obey Christ's command (John 14:15,21,23).

Christ commands us to love each other.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brother (1 John 3:16).

It is an essential part of salvation.

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, our heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins your Father will not forgive your sins (Matt 6:14,15).

A Prayer by Francis of Assisi Ad 1102

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.*

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Mission

Mbudi za ndokotora: the doctor's hand; God's hand

Rob Greidanus

In medicine they say things come in threes. I have experienced that several times over my last few months in Namibia. Sometimes the trilogy is joyous, such as the three miracles I witnessed in one incredible day a couple of months ago. Unfortunately, life-threatening complications can also come in threes. My work this last month illustrated that phenomenon.

Let me explain some medical jargon to put things in proper perspective. Pregnancy induced hypertension is very common in this part of the world. One of the conditions this high blood pressure causes is pre-eclampsia. Pre-eclampsia is an obstetrical complication where the mother is found to have very high blood pressure, edema (swelling) of her soft tissues, and protein loss through the kidneys. If not treated, severe pre-eclampsia can cause separation of the placenta from the womb (abruption), and sudden fetal death. It can also cause intracranial bleeding in the mother and other serious maternal complications. Pregnancy induced hypertension is one of the leading causes of maternal death throughout the world.

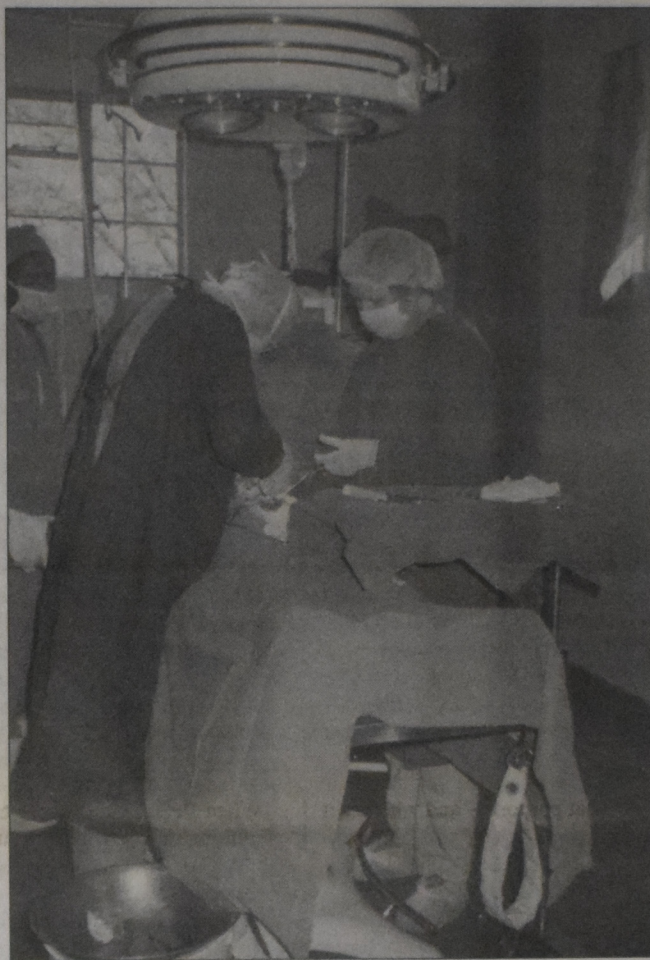
The treatment of choice for this condition is delivery of the baby. However, labor can aggravate the high blood pressure and therefore sometimes a caesarian delivery is indicated. Occasionally, pre-eclampsia goes to a more severe extreme called eclampsia. This is when the hypertension brings upon serious neurological changes in the mother, the hallmark being seizures. I only experienced one patient with eclampsia during nine years of Obstetrical practice in Canada. Incredibly, this month I would deal with three cases of eclampsia in less than 24 hours.

The first eclamptic mother was only 15 years old. She was referred from a district hospital after having four seizures in less than 12 hours. She was transferred without treatment and had a blood pressure of 240/120. She was unresponsive and was experiencing vaginal bleeding. I stabilized her as quickly as I could with intravenous hydralazine and Magnesium sulfate and then rushed her to the operating room.

In the operating room, we found the placenta in the process of abruping, but incredibly the baby suffered no ill consequences. I was thankful that she arrived when she did, as we had little time to spare. Over the course of the next day, the mother's condition completely resolved and she was left with no long term consequences of her malignant hypertension.

I was only alerted about the second mother after she delivered her baby and then had a grand mal seizure in the delivery room. However, on further questioning, the nurses informed me that she had high blood pressure and was combative and uncooperative during labor – signs of intracranial changes and evolving eclampsia even before delivery. However, she was only 14 years of age so they excused her behavior during labor as part of her immaturity. Thankfully, the seizures resolved with valium and magnesium therapy and she was discharged a few days later in good condition.

The third case was perhaps the most stressful. She was referred from a Health Centre a few hours away after having intermittent seizures for two days and extremely high blood pressures (in the vicinity of 260/130). Why the Health Centre waited so long to send her to us I still do not understand. Amazingly the baby was still alive by the time she arrived to our hospital; however, there was evidence of fetal distress with decelerations in the fetal heart rate. I was faced with a bit of a dilemma. With this blood pressure, if I rushed the mother to the theatre too quickly, the anesthetic could be life threatening for her. However, if we took too long getting the baby out, he would certainly perish.



I tried to find a happy medium and gave her some I.V. valium and hydralazine as the nurses prepared her for surgery. Our anesthetist was less than enthusiastic to make haste, but with some persuasion he made it happen. I delivered the baby as quickly as possible, and he had obvious signs of compromise, necessitating aggressive resuscitation. Thankfully, he responded favorably to this and in a matter of minutes was vigorous. The mother had a rocky course over the next two days in our Special Care Unit. However, after a few days she came around, and both her and baby have since been discharged in good condition.

Some of you medical types may be interested to hear how we give Magnesium Sulfate in Rundu. This medicine is by and large the treatment of choice for seizures and stabilizing the patient with eclampsia. However, giving too much of it can cause serious consequences, such as kidney failure or respiratory arrest (and therefore death) in the mother. In the West, we usually monitor it closely and run it on well controlled intravenous pumps. In Rundu however, we have no such pumps and so the nurses allegedly calculate the rate of infusion by counting the number of drops per minute running through the I.V. (although I have only seen the nurses actually doing this on a few occasions).

We cannot check magnesium levels in our hospital so we rely on the crude methods of checking reflexes, urinary output, and respiratory rate to decide if we are giving too much or too little magnesium. Because I was less than reassured that this was being done by the staff, I made several passes by the maternity ward through the day and night to make my own assessments and adjustments to the rate of the magnesium infusions. I guess the one advantage of having these complications come together in threes, is that

I could check on them all at one time.

The imprecision of giving magnesium is just one example of how medical practice standards are different in this part of the world. Being a doctor in Africa is a process of continuously yielding control to circumstances you have little or no influence over. Sometimes the gap is very big between what I would like to do and what actually gets done. These last two patients are examples of that. They were also great reminders to me of who is really in control.

This week, while on call, I was inducing labor in a mother with pre-eclampsia. She was at term and her high blood pressure was not responding to bed rest or antihypertensive medications. We had much to lose and little to gain by waiting to deliver her baby. She reacted to our induction favorably and was progressing well through labor. Suddenly, however, the baby started to show signs of distress. There were pronounced decelerations (drops in the babe's heart beat) and thick meconium was noted on exam (baby's first bowel movement mixed in with the amniotic fluid).

I called for the theatre staff and anesthetist to be brought in emergently so that we could do a caesarian section and expedite this child's delivery. Since it was evening, all the operating room nurses and the anesthetist were at their homes dispersed throughout Rundu. The protocol here is that the hospital driver is supposed to swiftly pick up the nurses in the hospital vehicle. Sometimes the driver is in hospital, as his job description requires, and other times he needs to be hunted down in the community (and even sometimes in the local pub). The process of retrieving the staff

can be agonizingly long – as it was on this night. It seemed even longer as I stood at the patient's bedside aware that every minute lost was increasing the chances of this baby not surviving.

In Canada, the standard of care (even in a rural hospital) would be to have the baby delivered within 30 minutes of the first signs of fetal distress. But as I waited here, minutes turned into hours and I could not help churning inside. I reassessed the patient frequently, hoping that the baby's heart rate would improve or that she would magically deliver the baby vaginally before the operating room staff arrived. However, her status and that of the baby remained unchanged. After almost two hours, the staff showed up and began their leisurely process of setting up the operating room. I found it very difficult to remain calm as I pleaded for them to speed up for the sake of the baby.

Once the patient was finally under anesthesia, I raced through the first stages of the surgery and had the baby out in less than five minutes. However, he showed visible signs of distress, with poor breathing efforts and tone. His airway was full of thick meconium and so the anesthetist aggressively suctioned his trachea and then intubated him to assist his ventilation. Eventually he began to breathe on his own but was struggling greatly. Tragically, he died later that night from meconium aspiration, a consequence of his acute distress.

I could not stop wondering if the outcome would have been different if we had been able to deliver him two hours earlier. The next morning on rounds his mother was visibly distraught over his death and showed more grief than I have seen from most patients in Rundu. She had lost her one and only son.

Continued on page 15...

Stewardship

Ultimately, it's all about love

Lisa M. Petsche

*This is the reason we were made
To know the love of our Creator
And to give the love He's given us away.*

Steven Curtis Chapman, recording artist

Five years ago, reacting in this column to the horrifying events of September 11, I noted how it had served as a wakeup call for many people – a jarring reminder of how our life on earth can end at any moment.

The truth that today is all we have may have hit home to some of us in more personal ways since then, due to a health scare, accident, life-threatening illness, or the illness or death of someone close.

Such reminders of life's fragility tend to have a sobering effect. They lead us to contemplate such questions as, What is the meaning of life and What is my unique purpose? We're prompted to re-evaluate our priorities and make some changes in the way we live.

Human nature being what it is, though, we're likely to revert to old patterns after a while.

For many in my generation, those patterns include a hectic lifestyle that leaves us exhausted, high-strung and disillusioned.

This North American phenomenon of "overwork, over-scheduling and time famine" has become epidemic, threatening "our health, our families and relationships, our communities and our environment," according to Take Back Your Time (TBYT), a non-profit, non-partisan initiative.

TBYT is best-known for its annual, October 24th Take Back Your Time Day campaign, designed to raise awareness of the problem of time stress and its far-reaching effects and stimulate dialogue aimed at problem-solving at both micro and macro levels. (To learn more, go online to www.timeday.org/.)

Take Back Your Time Day presents a wonderful opportunity to take stock of how we spend our time – doing what, with whom and for what purpose – and whether it reflects our priorities and Christian values.

For example, do we put our family ahead of work and other pursuits? Do we make ongoing efforts to enrich our relationship with our spouse?

As a family, do we spend regular, quality time together?

Do we focus as much, if not more, on our emotional and spiritual needs as on our material needs and wants?

Do we live in the present and appreciate the blessings that surround us?

Do we focus on the positive, looking for the good in others and the growth opportunities that challenges present?

Do we practice compassion and mercy?

Are we trying to make the world a better place by praying for those in need, performing regular acts of charity, getting involved in social justice issues and treating Earth's resources with respect?

It boils down to this: How do we wish to be remembered when we've passed on? As Christians, what will be our legacy?

Popular culture would have us believe we are valued primarily for external characteristics – our looks, our possessions and our measurable achievements – rather than for who we are as spiritual beings. Fortunately, we know better. Just because by society's standards our lives may not seem remarkable, doesn't mean our impact can't be significant – or even extraordinary.

The recent eulogies of a friend have been a powerful reminder of what's really important when all is said and done. People described how she carried out her roles as spouse, parent, sibling, friend, neighbor, colleague and more with integrity, grace and a welcome measure of humor. They reflected upon the ways she radiated love, joy, compassion, generosity, faith, hope and courage, more so than ever during her lengthy battle with cancer. They detailed how knowing her had enriched their lives and made them better people.

In the last few years, I've attended an unprecedented number of funeral visitations and services – several the result of sudden or premature death. In all the eulogies and informal remembrances, one simple but profound reality has stood out loud and clear about our purpose here on earth and what makes for a great legacy.

It's all about relationships. It's all about sharing. It's all about love. Since God is love, as long as we keep him front and centre in our lives, everything else will fall into place.

Life may not always be easy, but it will be filled with grace.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and a freelance journalist specializing in family life.



"ThanksLiving"

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

You've probably heard the line "Give the gift of life" – used to urge us to donate blood. Life is a gift from God. Many of us have been given a good life and there is so much for each one of us to be thankful for. Yet, we also experience things that we are not thankful for. It is hard to be grateful when pain, cancer, or a family crisis or loss has touched our lives.

In spite of setbacks and negative experiences, having a thankful, grateful, and even an expectant attitude is a key to living a full Christian life. We live to the fullest when we are fully engaged as designed by God. Having a positive attitude about the gifts that God gives to us is what 'thanksliving' is about. Don't rush to grab your dictionary – it's not in there – I made it up! Another name for it might be "grateful living".

Consider all that God has entrusted to us. Our lives were given to us to live up to the limits that God has determined for each one of us. God determined that you and I live in this era. He determined our gender, our looks, and our intellectual capability – all of it. He determines how long we may live and the opportunities for service in his great Kingdom enterprise. Each one of us was created in his image, made on purpose for his purposes. That's what our stewardship is about.

'Thanksliving' is not about serving because we have to! We may embrace duty and obedience but if we do that just to appease or to satisfy the requirements for living a Christian life – we are missing out on what it means to have a life of 'thanksliving'. After all, God doesn't need us to obey: "...he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else" Acts. 17:25.

An attitude of 'thanksliving' is self-driven: a desire or genuine willingness to give one's life in service to God's purposes. It reflects a close walk with God that seeks to please (as opposed to appease) the creator. Pray that God may plant that desire in you – a willingness to submit it all to him.

The rewards of a life lived in close communion with God, seeking his will, is a thankful life – a 'thanksliving' life – even when things are going wrong.

When Peter as a disciple tries to make something out of the fact that they had left everything to follow him, Jesus makes this reply: "I tell you the truth...no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age...and in the age to come, eternal life" Mark 10: 29, 30.

What a blessing to have a life of 'thanksliving'! As children of God we have life today and in the future the abundant life – eternally. There's more than enough to be grateful for. Salvation is God's free gift to us – paid for by Jesus our Savior. This Thanksgiving – give thanks but also live our thanks!

Stewardly Tip: Meditate and List: Prayer is powerful and made even more powerful when we pray specifically. This Thanksgiving find a quiet place with no interruptions, take a sheet of paper and a pen, and reflect on the things that have happened in your life. Take some time to list the things you are grateful for. Read Philippians 4:4-6, and spend some time in a specific prayer of thanks.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Freedom

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario. Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca



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Church

Tutu scolds South Africans for 'senseless crime', warns of new racism

Donwald Pressly

Cape Town (ENI) – Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu has admonished South Africans for not respecting one another, citing senseless crime, deaths at the hands of hijackers, rapes of children, violence by strikers, and students who damage their campuses.

"Rights go hand in hand with responsibility, with dignity, with respect for oneself and for the other," said Tutu, delivering the annual memorial lecture on 26 September for black consciousness leader Steve Biko, who died in 1977 while in police custody during the apartheid era.

"What has come over us?" Said Tutu speaking at the University of Cape Town. "Perhaps we did not realise just how apartheid has damaged us so that we seem to have lost our sense of right and wrong."

The retired Anglican leader said South Africans lacked pride in their environment. "Of course many of us still live in poverty and squalor," he said. "But you know how, although we were poor long ago, we used to be proud of our surroundings, sweeping even the street?" Things had changed, he said, because "we don't respect one another, because we don't respect ourselves".

He noted: "During our struggle against apartheid we refused to obey unjust laws because, rightly, we wanted to make South Africa ungovernable. We have achieved our goal. We are free.... We have an obligation to obey the laws made by our own legislators."

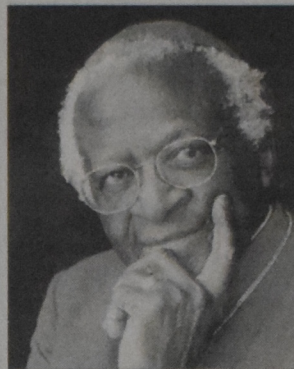
Tutu also warned black people, now they had achieved democratic rule, not to fall into the trap of treating people

from other racial groups in a racist manner.

"We must take seriously the cry of those who say in the past we were not white enough, today we are not black enough, even if they are wrong," he noted. "We must take seriously their perception to try to change it. We must beware the dangers of ethnic strife. See what it has done in Rwanda, Burundi, Bosnia, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo." Tutu recently was attacked verbally by the youth league of South Africa's ruling African National Congress after he criticized ousted vice president Jacob Zuma.

Two years ago Tutu had evoked the ire of President Thabo Mbeki by questioning what he called the cattle-like voting behavior of ruling African National Congress members.

But earlier in September, Mbeki defended Tutu against the attacks on him for questioning former vice-president Zuma's right to stand for the nation's presidency. Tutu had asked Zuma to relinquish his bid for the country's top job after the former deputy president admitted during a rape trial, in which he was acquitted, to having unprotected sex with a young HIV-positive woman.



Malawi commission orders removal of Buddha statues at orphanage

Frank Jomo Blantyre (ENI)

Malawi's Human Rights Commission has ordered a Taiwanese-funded orphanage to remove statues of Buddha from all dormitories, saying their presence amounts to brainwashing children into joining Buddhism against their will.

The Amitofo Care Centre near Blantyre opened three years ago and was touted as the biggest orphanage in southern Africa operated by followers of Buddhism. The centre has statues of Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, in all the dormitories and an elaborate temple situated within the orphanage.

The Malawi Human Rights Commission is a government funded organization whose members are appointed by the president, but its statutes allow it to work independently to promote human rights in the southern African nation.

Commissioner John Kapito said the body acted on research at the centre stemming from concerns expressed by relatives of orphans about the statues in the dormitories and that the children may be forced to become followers of Buddhism. Relatives, he said, had also complained that children there are not allowed to eat meat and were only occasionally allowed to visit their relatives.

"This contravenes Section 23 of the Malawi Constitution, which stipulates on how best children and orphans ought to be treated," said Kapito during the orphanage's open day. "This exposure to statues can easily influence them into joining the religion unwillingly since they cannot decide their future on their own."

At the same function Malawi's deputy information minister, John Bande, hailed the Buddhist community for constructing an imposing and beautiful orphanage but asked officials at the orphanage to consider allowing children to eat meat.



The Amitofo Care Centre

Responding to concerns raised by the two government officials, the centre's director, Master Hui Li, said that while the centre was a Buddhist organization, no child was ever forced into becoming a follower of Buddhism. He said, however, that the centre emphasises to children the importance of respecting the religion which he said, preaches peace. He also called for the understanding of the government regarding the statues in the dormitories saying they were icons of peace and children should be guided and learn from them.

"We will introduce the orphans to Buddhism but they will make their own choices on which religion they want to join when they grow up," Li had said during the opening ceremony of the orphanage two years ago, stressing that matters of religion, race and culture are trivial for those doing charity work. He said his foundation was ready to help any human being.

Americans and the God question

"In God we trust"... but what kind of God? Most Americans (85 to 90 percent) believe in God. A large majority prays and almost half attend church or other services at least monthly. But how do they view God, and does it affect social and political attitudes? A new survey from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, called "American Piety in the 21st Century" probes this subject. Conducted by Gallup pollsters, the survey is receiving deserved praise for its depth of questioning.

While some critics point to a degree of bias – Baylor is a Baptist university – religion pollsters say the survey is generally sound and especially revealing about people's concept of deity.

The use of religion in politics has helped drive polling on faith. But understanding how Americans think about God is also important in gauging how they approach the moral issues of the day, and how they relate to each other.

The most innovative aspect of the Baylor study is how its questions turned up four ways in which people conceive of deity.

The survey offered 16 words to characterize God, such as motherly, wrathful, and severe. It supplied 10 descriptions relating to God's involvement in the world, including "a cosmic force in the universe," "removed from world affairs," and "concerned with my personal well-being."

About 5 percent of the 1,721 respondents were atheists, but the rest had a view of God that fit one of four basic "types":

Type "A" is authoritarian, metes out punishment, and is highly involved in world and personal affairs (the view of about 31 percent).

Type "B" is benevolent, also active in the world and individual lives, but more forgiving (23 percent).

Type "C" is critical, not engaged but still passing judgment – which individuals will discover in a later life (16 percent).

Type "D" is distant, neither active nor judging – but a force which set the laws of nature in motion (about 24 percent).

The study found that even people within the same denomination hold different concepts of God – which may explain schisms over dogma. Evangelicals and black Protestants, however, hold the most uniform views (a majority sees God as authoritarian).

It also found that the "four Gods" track more closely with political and social attitudes than do traditional indicators such as church attendance. The study found, for instance, that the closer one moves toward the authoritarian model, the more likely one finds abortion and gay marriage are "always wrong."

Baylor plans more such surveys, and there's still much to plumb. Some religion experts, for instance, suspect a certain superficiality in Americans' religiosity. How might they weigh in on the import of the Sermon on the Mount or the Ten Commandments? And then there's the growth in nontraditional and non Judeo-Christian faiths, especially among young people.

Americans know theirs is a religious country. This, and future studies, can help act as a mirror to help them better appreciate common bonds as well as differences in what they worship. The more people know how God is reflected in individual lives, the more understanding they will have toward others.

Christian Science Monitor

Church

Indian Christians protest at new anti-conversion measures in Gujarat

By Anto Akkara

Calcutta, India (ENI) – Christian groups in India say that moves in the state of Gujarat to amend an existing anti-religious conversion law will further inflame communal tension.

"The amendment, passed amidst enormous opposition, takes away the fundamental rights guaranteed to an individual," the Evangelical Fellowship of India said in a statement. "Only those converting to Islam and Christianity have to report to the government."

The Gujarat legislature on September 19 excluded Buddhism and Jainism from the scope of the state law by declaring them to be branches of the Hindu religion, thereby exempting people converting to these faiths from the need to seek government permission.

The Evangelical group urged the state governor to prevent the measure from entering into force by withholding his assent.

Samson Christian, a member of the Church of North India and head of the Gujarat section of the All India Christian Council, told Ecumenical News International, the proposed amendment was "a ploy to isolate and marginalise the Christians."

Christians make up slightly more than half of one per cent of the approximately 50 million people in Gujarat, which is governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party, whose critics accuse it of following a Hindu nationalist policy.

The Rev. Cedric Prakash, director of a Gujarat-based centre for human rights, warned of a "sinister agenda to create suspicion and therefore division."

The original law aimed at curbing religious conversions was introduced in 2003 when the state's deputy interior minister, Amit Shah, asserted that "reports have been received that conversions from one religion to another are made by use of force or allurements or by fraudulent means."

Violence in Dutse, Northern Nigeria, following Pope's speech

At least ten churches were set alight and Christian homes and businesses were looted on Tuesday September 19, during rioting in Dutse, the capital of Jigawa State in Northern Nigeria. The attacks are believed to have been a reaction to the reports of the Pope's recent Regensburg address, though other rumors are also circulating.

Nigerian Church leaders had feared such an outbreak would result from the outcry which followed the Pope's comments. When a rumor started circulating about a dispute between a Muslim man and a Christian woman in which each had insulted the other's religion, local representatives of the Christian Association of Nigeria visited the local police station to warn them of a possible outbreak of violence. They asked for the police to deploy to forestall the violence, but the police did not respond.

Bishop Kwashi of Jos told Anglican Mainstream "Only about three churches out of about 15 are still standing in the town". The Churches which were burnt down included St Peter's Anglican Cathedral, Assemblies of God, three Evangelical Church of West Africa churches and Living Faith church. The Anglican Bishop, Rt Rev Yusufu Lumu, had to seek shelter in a local police station along with his wife and three children when his home was partially destroyed in the violence.

The violence started at 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday and only subsided late Wednesday evening. According to local sources, the police were not deployed until the violence had already subsided.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide Advocacy Director, Alexa Papadouris, says: "This latest episode of religious violence serves to highlight the underlying tension in the region. Despite the indications of violence in the area, the police failed to intervene to stop these attacks. We call upon the police authorities in Dutse to assist in restoring calm to the city and to ensure the safety and protection of all citizens at this time. We also call for the speedy compensation of churches and businesses destroyed during this violence."

Cancellation of Mozart opera in Berlin sparks free speech debate

Berlin (ENI) – German chancellor Angela Merkel has criticised as "self censorship" the cancellation of a Mozart opera in Berlin because of concern that a scene featuring the severed head of the Prophet Muhammad could lead to attacks by Muslims.

"Self censorship because of fear is intolerable," Merkel said in a September 27 interview with the Hanover-based *Neue Presse*, following the decision of a Berlin opera house not to stage Mozart's opera, "Idomeneo", the German Protestant news agency epd reported.

The cancellation of the scheduled November performance of the opera came under fierce criticism from German artists and politicians including Berlin's governing mayor Klaus Wowereit who said the decision was wrong. He said he was not aware of any "specific threat that justified the cancellation of the opera".

Mozart's "Idomeneo" portrays the rebellion of human beings against the gods. In the production by Hans Neuenfels that was to have been performed at Berlin's Deutsche Oper, Idomeneo, the king of Crete, steps onto the stage in the epilogue with a bloody bag, from which he pulls out the severed heads of Poseidon, Jesus, Buddha and Muhammad.

The chairperson of Germany's Islamic council, Ali Kizilkaya, told the online *Netzeitung* newspaper that the disputed scene would certainly have "injured" the feelings of Muslims.

But a national leader of Turkish associations, Kenan Kolat, urged Muslims to be tolerant. "Art must be free," Kolat was quoted saying.

The decision to drop the opera from the Deutsche Oper program followed days of furor because of a speech by Pope Benedict XVI in which he quoted a medieval Christian emperor referring to "evil and inhuman" aspects of Islam, such as the Prophet's



Berlin's Deutsche Oper

command to spread the faith "by the sword".

Earlier this year Danish newspaper cartoons depicting Muhammad triggered worldwide demonstrations by Muslims. This led the Geneva-based World Council of Churches to deplore violent protests but also to say that freedom of speech "had been used to cause pain by ridiculing peoples' religion, values and dignity."

In Berlin, Neuenfels criticised the cancellation of his production as "hysteria" and said he would refuse to make any changes.

The German government's top official for culture, Bernd Neumann, said: "If concern about possible protests leads to self-censorship, then the democratic culture of free speech is endangered." Still, Green Party politician Volker Beck said he understood the refusal to allow the performing of the opera, although arguments about art should not be waged with violence.

Kirsten Harms, director of the opera house, said she decided to cancel the production after security officials said there was "an incalculable security risk" following an anonymous call from a person who warned about possible reactions to the scene.

Convert from Islam to Christianity killed in Somalia

BARNABAS FUND – Somali Christian sources report that Ali Mustaf Maka'il, who converted from Islam to Christianity eleven months ago, was shot and killed in the Manabolyo quarter of Mogadishu on September 7, 2006. Ali (22) was a cloth merchant and college student.

According to the source, the gunman was loyal to the Union of Islamic Courts (ICU), the Islamist organization that took power in Mogadishu in early June 2006 and now controls much of southern Somalia. The gunman shot Ali in the back after he refused to join a crowd chanting Quran verses in honor of the lunar eclipse. (Solar and lunar eclipses are significant in Islam and are accompanied by special congregational prayers.) The ICU confiscated his body for 24 hours before delivering it to the grieving family.

It seems that under the new Islamist rulers, who include hard-line jihadi elements, the tragic history of persecution and martyrdom for Somalia's tiny Christian community is set to continue and most likely to worsen.

In July 2006 there were unconfirmed reports that three Christians had been shot and killed by Islamists as they returned home from a prayer meeting. In October 2005 an evangelist and house church leader, Osman Sheik Ahmed, was shot dead by Islamist radicals. Children of Christian Somali refugees in Kenya have been kidnapped by Muslim

relatives and taken to Islamic institutions in Somalia for "rehabilitation".

The leader of the ICU, Hassan Dahir Aweys, promised to implement sharia in all areas he controls. According to sharia, apostates (those who leave Islam for another religion), must be killed. ICU leaders have even threatened to kill as apostates Muslims who are lax in their prayers, claiming this is commanded by shari'a. Several Muslims have been publicly flogged for drug related offences since the ICU took control.

Over 99.5 per cent of Somalis are Muslims and regard Christianity as a foreign religion of their historic enemies in Ethiopia and of their former colonial masters the Italians and the British. There is a long history of conflict between Muslim Somalis and Christian Ethiopians, so anti-Christian sentiment runs deep.

Most Somalis take it for granted that a true Somali is a Muslim and converts to Christianity must be traitors. These prejudices, widely held by Muslim Somalis, seem to be used to justify violence against Christians, both indigenous and expatriate. The US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the recent Israeli campaign against Hizbullah in Lebanon have fuelled and inflamed the inherent hostility to the West and to Christians.

Perspective

Israel: the canary in the coal mine

Harry Antonides

I have a premonition that will not leave me; as it goes with Israel so will it go with all of us. Should Israel perish, the holocaust will be upon us.

(Eric Hoffer, "Israel's Peculiar Position," *LA Times*, May 26, 1968)

Our position on the Middle East is clear. We want the root of tensions to be removed. During these 60 years what was the root of massacres, crimes and conflicts? The solution is clear and nothing has changed.

(Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, *Tehran*, August 29, 2006)

The recent 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah and its aftermath have spawned a wealth of commentary and reportage as contradictory and confusing as any that has come from that part of the world.

News without context

It should not go unnoticed that nearly all of the reporting and commentary have been about tactics, that is about the how of things, who is winning, or losing. Both reporters and "consumers" of the news are preoccupied with details, numbers, tactics, and especially the spectacular, notably live television broadcasts of bombings, riots, massive demonstrations, and that sort of thing. The more violence, the more telegenic.

The result is that the news is presented without context or a grasp of the historic background. Instead of acquiring true insight and real knowledge, many just develop opinions on the basis of the latest information provided by the most persuasive presenters, and especially by the graphic pictures shown on television and now on the Internet.

Related to the foregoing is that many tend towards opinions that are safe and uncontroversial, which is the attitude that has given rise to the current epidemic of political correctness. This outlook arises from a desire to believe what is generally accepted within the thinking elites in the academy, the media, the political Left, and the entertainment industry.

Practically, this means that belief in secularism (there is no God), moral relativism (there is no truth), and tolerance (multiculturalism) has become the new orthodoxy embraced by every right thinking, rational person. The

mainstream media play a key role in fostering the worldview shaped by this mindset.

Israel's precarious position

All of this has a profound effect on the prevailing opinion about the state of Israel in the midst of a hostile Arab/Muslim world. From its very beginning, Israel's existence has been bitterly opposed and fought by its Arab neighbors. That conflict is not only a political contest over land between Israel and the Arab world, but it is also a conflict of Jews versus Muslims.

There is reason to believe that this seemingly intractable war against Israel is a microcosm of the war declared by radical Islamists on all infidels. In other words, Israel's fight is ours too. The leading fatwa proclaimers have cast their net wide, condemning not only the two Satans, but the entire non-Muslim world. Ahmadinejad has given voice to this ambition again and again, as he did in this prediction: "Allah willing, Islam will conquer all the mountain tops of the world."

The so-called peace negotiations have gone nowhere because one side is not interested in peace but in the destruction of Israel. That became clear for all to see when Yasser Arafat walked away from an offer that gave him nearly everything he had demanded. Instead, he unleashed the reign of terror that killed hundreds of innocent Israeli (and Palestinian) men, women and children, all the while deepening the misery and hopelessness of the Palestinian people.

The mainstream world press has contributed to the idea that Israel is the cause of the ongoing violence and the bully "occupier" of a dispossessed people. The press and the schools in the Arab world are conducting an intensive campaign to poison the minds, beginning with children at a very young age, by peddling the most outlandish lies about the Jewish people. Suicide bombers of Israeli citizens are hailed as heroic martyrs assured of a privileged place in heaven.

The upshot is not only that Israel is demonized in the Arab world but that even in the free West public opinion has turned against Israel. Now there exists a widely held perception that Israel and the U.S., as the one nation that has stood with Israel, are a major threat to peace. Following are a few blatant instances of media bias that could

be multiplied many times.

The pliant media

The Jenin "massacre". In April 2002 the Israeli military was determined to destroy the Palestinian haven of terrorists and suicide bombers imbedded in the Palestinian refugee camp in Jenin. Immediately the British and other major news outlets were filled with horror stories of wanton destruction and the indiscriminate murder by Israeli soldiers of hundreds of innocent civilians. The *Guardian's* editorial on April 17, 2002 likened Israel's action in Jenin to the 9/11 attack on the U.S. The same paper carried this headline on May 6: "How the Jenin Battle Became a Massacre." The mighty BBC trumpeted the same charges. However, none of these reports were verified. When the smoke of the media's smear campaign lifted, it was revealed that 56 people had been killed, mostly in bitter house-to-house fighting, 23 of whom were Israeli soldiers. (That number included 13 who were drawn into a ambush by women who pretended to plead for help from the soldiers.) But the damage in demonizing Israel had been done.

Tuvia Grossman. His picture appeared in the *New York Times* on September 30, 2000, bloodied and scared with a club-wielding Israeli policeman hovering over him. Another young Palestinian victim of Israeli brutality. That's what the caption said below the picture that was flashed across the world. In fact, he was a 20-year old Jewish student from Chicago studying in Jerusalem. If the policeman had not intervened, Grossman would have been killed by a mob of some 40 Palestinian thugs. He spent ten days in a Jerusalem hospital, then returned to Chicago where he was confined to a wheel chair for five months. The photographer who snapped the picture obviously was not interested in the truth, nor was the photo editor of the *Times*. The *Times* apologized at the insistence of Grossman's father, but no apology can undo the harm done to Israel's reputation.

The Qana fraud. Hezbollah has been hiding its fighters and rocket launchers among the civilian population in Lebanon – which is considered a war crime. Thereby it accomplishes two things that make excellent propaganda footage. It knows that Israel seeks to minimize civilian casualties and



At the wailing wall

will hold back in its efforts to destroy Hezbollah strongholds and weaponry. But when civilians are killed, as they inevitably will be, Hezbollah can then accuse Israel of war crimes. This charade played itself out after Israel destroyed a complex in Qana on July 30 in which even some children died. But it was found that the pictures of the dead, some of whom were imported from elsewhere, were manipulated for maximum effect. Reuters dismissed the photographer responsible for this fraud, but the haters of Israel will continue to believe the doctored photos.

Stolen money. Israel's military response to Hezbollah's rocket attacks and the capture of two Israeli soldiers has been disastrous for the Lebanese. But Hezbollah now poses as the caring provider for the displaced victims of the war. They are distributing thousands of dollars in American currency to all whose houses and other belongings were destroyed, making sure that television photos of their "generosity" are broadcast all over the world. Hezbollah's fighters are indeed master propagandists, and more. Some who have had a careful look at the distributed funds insist that they

are counterfeit. (See David Frum, "Counterfeit News," *National Post*, August 26, 2006.) How fitting that a terrorist organization pretends to help the victims of its own recklessness by doling out fake money. How bitterly ironic that even in this sham humanitarian action Hezbollah relies on, while degrading, the financial resources of the country it despises.

Funneling the news. That Hezbollah manipulates the news is bad enough. What is worse is that many Western journalists are complicit in this fraud. They report the information provided to them without asking the hard questions. Nic Robertson, a CNN correspondent, has admitted that Hezbollah controls all access to information and carefully chaperones all journalists. He said that stories about Lebanon should be read with "more than a grain of salt." But none of the journalists permitted into Hezbollah territory have accompanied their reports with that warning.

Mike Wallace's infamous interview. Wallace has earned a reputation as a hard-nosed interviewer on CBS's 60-Minutes. But when he interviewed the

See *Israel* on p.13...

Sphere sovereignty

Sphere sovereignty - Part 2

The new, nineteenth-century crisis and its impact on society

The principle of sphere sovereignty formed the biblical foundation Kuyper used to wage especially his spiritual, but also his social and political warfare against a deplorable crisis that had made its inroads in Europe, as it did in other nations around the world. In his opinion Holland was the last country of Europe to face the challenge of this crisis. The crisis, earlier referred to by Harry in his article "Muslim stories and our story," had come in the form of the very destructive influence of Pantheism in nineteenth-century Europe.

Pantheism was regarded as a powerful force that drove life along the road of Evolution. That road was well-paved by Darwin's theories of processes which were known for their dismissal of clear and distinctive boundaries between species. This last reality of a blurring of sphere boundaries had started by the influence of the forerunner of Pantheism, namely the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.

Let me explain. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Holland was trying to develop itself into a growing commercial and colonial empire. Almost simultaneously, the spirit of the Enlightenment became a growing influence in Dutch life. It brought forth a spirit of tolerance and a growing openness to new ideas. Runner, in his discussion of the French Revolution and rationalism, quoted the following words of Charles Frankel:

The special effort of the Enlightenment was to find a foundation in every field, from the profane sciences to revelation, from music to morals, and theology to commerce, such that thinking and action could be made independent of speculative metaphysics and supernatural revelation. Religion was treated mainly as an appendage to morals and discussed as though it were a part of physics.

During that century, Rationalism "à la Descartes" had made significant inroads into the Dutch nation, resulting in clear but unfortunate divisions within society. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Netherlands and Europe as a whole had come to feel the impact of the French Revolution with its slogan, "Fraternity, Equality, and Liberty." Regarding the French Revolution Runner remarked:

The idea that the French Revolution was a world revolution fundamentally affecting all humanity dates from the eighteenth century itself. In 1796 Edmund Burke wrote: "It is not France extending a foreign empire over other nations; it is a sect aiming at universal empire, and beginning with the conquest of France."

The seriousness of this world-encompassing revolution was also expressed by Hans Sedlmayer as follows:

In the years and decades before 1789, an inner revolution set in Europe, the range of which the mind could not discern: the events we group together under the name 'French Revolution' are themselves only a more visible aspect of this awful catastrophe. Up to the present we have not succeeded in getting a firm hold on the situation this event has created, neither in the spiritual nor in the practical realm.

The influence of the Enlightenment had made Europe receptive to the new crisis formed by Pantheism. It had paved the way for this crisis to have a significantly negative impact on European societies. Pantheism, as it is presently embraced by the New Age Movement, was the doctrine that said that the whole universe is God, and that every part of the universe is a manifestation of God, where all is basically one.

Kuyper regarded Pantheism as a destructive storm that was out to break down the important and meaningful boundaries between the different spheres of life. He was convinced that Pantheism, as was the case before with Darwin's theories of processes, was a serious attack on these boundaries, which were borderlines God had determined and installed.

These boundaries included the boundaries between person and person, such as those that determine marriage, along with its norms and values. They also included spiritual boundaries that distinguish good from evil, sin from holiness, and heresy from profession.

Kuyper believed that significant distinctions between spheres were created by God for the good of society. Darwin's destructive effort to dismantle boundaries and demarcation lines between spheres was seen by him as a desire to get rid of God (zucht om van God af te komen). He viewed society of his days as sitting in the waiting room of a mortuary.

That century had witnessed Pantheism committing spiritual adultery, the same Pantheism that later was praised by Hegel as the "favorite system" of the nineteenth century. The influence of Pantheism, like the evolution theories of Darwin, became powerful forces that affected the resilience of Europeans. A great majority of them had become quite willing to enjoy tolerance and openness to new ideas.

Another result of that vast spreading spirit of liberation was the abatement and even the breaking down of important boundaries between the distinctive spheres in society. First Groen, and then Kuyper, understood that a serious issue was at stake, namely, the reality and influence of the sovereign God who had established these boundaries within life for the benefit of the various spheres. Kuyper was intent on maintaining and protecting the sovereignty of God in the diverse spheres of life. Holland, as the last bulwark of freedom on Europe's continent was reaching the point of collapse. He felt that at all costs, this impending collapse should be prevented; the last staunch bulwark of freedom must not be allowed to cave in.

The ethical impact of Pantheism

Kuyper made the essential observation that at the heart of this crisis was a more serious issue. He was convinced that the issue at stake was the position of Christ – the "One who at one time had sworn to be King, the Bearer of Sovereignty." Pantheism removed the boundary line between God and the world.

Kuyper realized that unbridled Pantheism and rationalism would lead to serious consequences on the personal well-being of men and women. He especially had in mind the breaking down of human character, since that affected all the factors of his personality: his decisiveness, determination, conviction, will and resilience. He explained that due to the interaction between human character and self-awareness, the clarity of our thinking would become muddled as a result of the breaking down of his character. Eventually this would also lead to the loss of human freedom.

Meeting the new, nineteenth-century crisis: State and church

Groen and Kuyper had deep personal feelings about the crisis they faced. Groen, the politician, had committed himself to the cause of the Gospel. He believed that the Bible was the basis for justice, morality, authority, and freedom. He saw, in the face of this crisis in Europe, that this freedom came from God. He was also convinced that this freedom needed to be protected by man's respect for the distinctive spheres in society. Such protection could come, foremost, by accepting the sovereignty belonging to each particular sphere.

Sovereignty stood very high on his agenda when it came to the relationship between state and church. He maintained that state and church were two sovereign spheres of life. Later, Kuyper expanded on Groen's conclusion by saying that these two important spheres, state as well as church, had come into existence by the grace of God. Therefore,

these spheres have the duty to act as servants of God and to honor God in and through their servanthood.

Groen argued, for example, that the state is not called to determine the teachings of the church, as these fall completely under the authority of the church. In his book, *Ter Nagedachtenis aan Stahl* (1862) Groen introduced the phrase sphere sovereignty (*Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*) to distinguish the calling of the church from that of the state. Through Groen's work Stahl understood that the state was tied to the divine world order. It was a created sphere like all other spheres with particular, though important, limited responsibilities. This fact provided the needed assurance for the legitimate existence of other spheres. Stahl did not think that it was a good idea to give the responsibility of the production of goods into the hands of the state. Such responsibility belonged to spheres like business and industry. The state should mind its own business and leave people free to choose for themselves what spheres of life they wish to be part of and the kind of work they want to do.

In their efforts to meet the crisis head on, Groen and Kuyper called upon the spheres of church and Christian education, leaving the state out of it. Kuyper's reason for excluding the state in his fight against the destructive power of pantheism was the state's misuse of power. As a matter of fact, one main reason for his use of the principle of sphere sovereignty was to prevent the state's transgression of its own sovereignty. He wanted to tame the government's abuse of power, which was impinging on the rights and sovereignty of other spheres. He realized that the state's deplorable behavior and attitude would lead to the loss of freedom, and eventually to the complete loss of the precious principle of sovereignty within each sphere of society.

The government has often been accused of being the most crushing and sinister opponent of liberty. Kuyper, therefore, resorted to the church and Christian higher education (university) to counter the destructive influence of Pantheism. He realized that this crisis was not only leading to the breakdown of the divinely ordained boundaries, but was also causing spiritual atrophy among the people.

He also noted similar declines in spiritual strength and resilience during the time of the Roman Empire and during the Middle Ages. These particular declines, he noticed, were overcome successfully with the help of the Church of Christ. This time, however, Kuyper wondered whether the church would be able to provide the people with the help needed to restore their fading resilience. The life of the church was at stake, and with it the gospel message of truth and the freedom which flowed out of the truth. A strong counter action was called for.

The church engaged in the fight against the nineteenth-century crisis

A brief overview of church history during the eighteenth and nineteenth century will lead us to Kuyper's days. During the eighteenth century, due to the influence of the Enlightenment, orthodox voices in the churches, as in government, saw their influence dwindle. They eventually became a minority, as they were in all other main areas of life. Within the church, a wall of division developed, with the uneducated and the poor on the one side, and the more educated and the wealthy on the other side. The latter, including many educated pastors, embraced the spirit of modernism, rejected the narrowness of the past, and delivered their homilies in learned discourses. Consequently, the common folk began to lean to a more experiential, mystical, and pietistic form of the Christian faith. They looked for other ways to be edified and built up by the preaching of God's Word.

They found the solution in the formation of small groups, called conventicles. These households of faith met in private

History

Sphere sovereignty ... continued from p. 11

homes and were often led by lay leaders. They became the spiritual feeding ground for renewed spiritual growth, mutual support, and encouragement for many people.

This was the situation in the Dutch Reformed Church at the turn of the 19th century. At the time of Groen and in the early years of Kuyper, it was still officially a unified State Church despite divisions in the church. However, a break within the State Church seemed inevitable.

The anticipated break was finally realized in the Secession (Afscheiding) of 1834. The Secession, however, was not a one-time event. D. H. Kromminga comments that the Secession really consisted of a series of movements out of the National Church, which took place over a period of about twenty years.

So Kuyper, as a young man, grew up during the Secession years. This break within the church was more serious than initially was expected, as the National Synod of the established church took comfort in the fact that the number of seceders was rather small. By 1836, they numbered some four thousand men, women, and children, who mostly came from "the humbler walks of life." But, beyond expectation, this group of believers grew spiritually so strong that it astounded its adversaries. It soon became clear that this spiritual growth and resilience was based on their common love for Reformed doctrine and their loyalty to the Reformed formularies as founded on the Word of God.

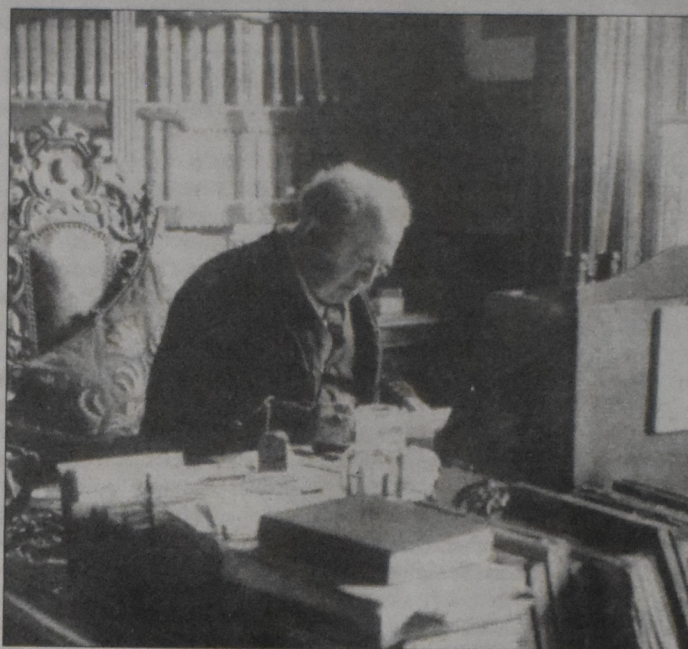
The Secession was not at all an isolated event in the Netherlands. A similar secession had taken place in Switzerland a little earlier, and for similar reasons, namely, to rescue the Reformed tradition from the deadly embrace of a liberal State. For the same reasons, other secessions took place in the Scottish National Reformed or Presbyterian Churches and even among the Lutheran Churches in Germany. There was, therefore, broad European support for the Dutch seceders well described in Kromminga's *The Christian Reformed Tradition*:

From foreign Reformed Churches came proofs of sympathy with the seceders. In Switzerland and in France the Reformed observed days of prayer in their behalf. From France came a petition signed by one hundred and seventy-three ministers asking the king to grant the seceders freedom of worship. From France came also a request to the National Synod of the established Church to intercede with the king in behalf of the seceders, evidently in ignorance of the fact that this body had requested their repression. These efforts of foreign co-religionists were not effective, but they were encouraging for the seceders in their long and hard struggle to obtain freedom of worship from the government.

However, it was that struggle for freedom of worship that led eventually to some internal divisions among the seceders. Then, unexpectedly, the ranks of original seceders were suddenly strengthened when in 1886 Kuyper led about 500,000 more people out of the state church in an event known as the Doleantie. This group (Doleantie means "The Grieving Church") joined the seceders of 1834 to form *De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* in 1892.

In the meantime, the Theological School of Kampen was founded in 1854 with the cooperation of men of Reformed persuasion in the established church. This Theological School was established to train pastors who would be firmly grounded in the Word of God. These pastors would help the church to be and remain resilient in spirit and successful in opposing the growing and destructive influence of liberalism.

Though aware of the spiritual weakness of the churches, Kuyper nevertheless called them to the important task to resist the destructive worldly forces. Faced with the question of how to go about this resistance, he explained that they



Abraham Kuyper at his desk.

must begin by drawing a boundary line around their own sphere, the church. He based this explanation on Groen, who declared, "In our isolation lies our strength."

However, this isolation was not to be understood as a withdrawal from the world. Rather, it was understood as a return to living by the principles unique to the Christian faith and the Christian world-and-life view. Within this sphere, life had to develop to the point that it could give account for itself and cope with the battle that could not be avoided. In that isolation the church had a chance to strengthen her own vitality and to be of help of other spheres for their betterment. In his book, *Pro Rege of Het Koningschap van Christus*, Kuyper showed clearly his opposition to what he called a "world-flight mentality arising from the viewpoint of the Anabaptists, and found in evangelical Christian circles." Kuyper called people to live *Pro Rege*, i.e. under the kingship of Christ, "for the King," in all areas of life.

Higher education and the nineteenth-century crisis

Alongside his work for the church Kuyper also worked hard to get help and support from the sphere of Christian higher education in his fight against the destructive power of Pantheism. It is of interest to know how the Free University came to be established. We go back to the sixteenth century, when the University of Leiden was the Christian institute in the sphere of higher education. Wayne Kobes reminds us that during the sixteenth century the influence of a "God-denying humanism and a liberal theology" had not left the Dutch universities untouched.

Since its establishment in 1575, the University of Leiden had been "intentionally and explicitly" governed by Calvinistic principles. However, this University had become progressively more liberal.

An important factor in this development had been the appointment of Professor Jacob Arminius to the faculty of theology at Leiden's University despite strong opposition from many Reformed pastors and congregations. Arminius, dubbed the "voice of Erasmus," had already caused a serious controversy in the Dutch churches. After his death, a group sympathetic to his views (Arminians) collectively took the initiative to document their beliefs in what was called the Remonstrance of 1610. These teachings included: election based on foreseen faith; universal atonement; par-

tial depravity; resistible grace; and the possibility of a lapse from grace. These public teachings eventually led to the convening of the historically important Synod of Dort (1618-1619). The direct result of this long convention, attended by Dutch delegates and twenty-six delegates from eight foreign countries, was the composition of a Doctrinal Standard called *The Canons of Dort*. This body of teachings was, in essence, a systematic refutation of the teachings promoted by Arminius' followers.

However, despite these serious efforts to defend the truth of the Word of God by trying to stop the liberal influence, the fact remained that, in general, Dutch life "followed the voice of Erasmus rather than that of the great Genevan (Calvin)."

Kuyper understood the struggle against powerful liberal forces as a spiritual one, as these forces were trying to undermine and do away with the sovereignty of God. In 1880, he became the main force behind the establishment of the Free University of Amsterdam, which he considered to be a

formidable force and an effective instrument in the hands of those who wish to engage effectively in the "critical issues of the nation and of the world." Kuyper looked at this new University as a means by which the church would be able to staunchly oppose a world of learned men, and to row against the current of enormously attractive temptations. What he envisioned was that Christians in high positions who would see and take the opportunity to develop Christian principles and values in the various spheres of society.

He understood that the church must equip believers, as Charles Colson observes in his book *The Body: Being light in the darkness*, to know and to defend their faith and to apply it in the world. In equipping believers Kuyper needed the help of the Free University. Kuyper developed a mission strategy based on a missions vision I call *sphere missions* to put up a good fight against the powerful force of liberalism.

That was over one hundred years ago, but...are we not facing a similar situation in Canada as well?

In my next article I hope to write soon I will lay out that vision of sphere missions in greater detail. In that context I will speak of sphere sovereignty as a missiological theory that calls upon believers to revitalize their priesthood to serve the Lord in the many spheres of life he has placed them. In the meantime, I would like to invite readers to respond to a discussion on the principle of sphere sovereignty as that in so many instances can and needs to be promoted and applied throughout the world, and not the least in Canada.

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***See website: www.chrtiancourier.ca, feature articles for list of resources used.

Work

Leave the mosh pit

Don't let the hazies, lazies, and crazies of work turn your life upside down

Chris Bosch

We can all probably recall at least one personal story of work-life imbalance and the harm it caused a loved one. My own occurred several years ago. As with many of these stories, it ended with an epiphany, a moment of clarity that brought life back into focus.

I had been working as a representative for the Christian Labour Association in Ontario for only a couple of years. Like many new employees, I poured myself into the job, working long hours, weekends, and living in hotels for several days at a stretch.

My wife was also working at the time, but her routine changed when we had our first child. So did mine. No longer were we the couple with two careers. We became a single-income family with one important mission: provide a safe, nurturing, and loving environment for our child. I vowed to improve the balance between family and work obligations, but I found it difficult to do both well. Unintentionally, I began to favour the obligations of work over family.

The consequence of this decision pierced me in an unforgettable way one day as I was standing in the Vancouver airport talking to my wife on the phone. I was calling to tell her that my flight was delayed and that I wouldn't be home until very late. This was at the end of a five-day stint of meetings in British Columbia, preceded by many evening meetings and early morning work-site visits. I was having difficulty remembering the features of my young son's face, and I



was concerned that the mailman was getting more face time with him than me.

Feeling alone with our one-year old son in her arms, my wife said, "I miss you," and began to weep softly. A tingle traveled through my body, momentarily fastening me to where I stood. What am I doing? I thought.

Too often, it takes a crisis to wake us from our stupor. This was my wake-up call. I had to bring balance back to my life or risk losing everything that was important to me.

Many studies now confirm what we know in our hearts – weighing our priorities and allocating appropriate measures of time and energy to them is essential to our health and well-being. But how do we achieve this harmonization of priorities?

Every year, as part of the union's training for new representatives, I run a workshop with my colleague Gideon Strauss, CLAC's

research and education director. During one of the sessions, Gideon takes the new recruits through an exercise that helps them connect their deepest desires or loves with their work as labour relations specialists. By identifying what we love, so the reasoning goes, we identify what matters to us and learn what shapes us into the people we are. The first step to achieving work-life balance is to consciously list our loves, which in turn

provides bearing for our efforts.

Second, we need to do a self-assessment. What factors are standing in the way of successfully achieving harmony?

Bill Butterworth, author of *On-the-Fly Guide to Balancing Work and Life*, suggests that we identify the hazies, lazies, and crazies that pop up and disrupt our bearing. Attending to the urgent at the expense of what is important leads to the hazies. The small and sometimes large distractions that we believe require our immediate attention tug us away from the important activities, and soon we find ourselves in a debilitating fog that obscures our wider perspective.

Sometimes, we fail to achieve our priorities because we fail to take responsibility for the imbalance in our lives – as I suddenly realized in the Vancouver airport. The lazies are a common defense mechanism for the busy status quo. We say, "You have no idea

how difficult it is to manage all of my obligations. I have a mortgage. I have a team to lead. People are counting on me. I have elderly parents to take care of. I need to go to the gym. I am a single parent." But shifting the blame to external factors is not helpful – balance is our responsibility.

If you have ever been to a rock concert, you may have experienced or witnessed what is appropriately called the mosh pit: tens or even hundreds of people close to the stage gyrating wildly, slamming into each other at breakneck speed. From an outsider's perspective, it looks like chaos, a crazy, dangerous environment that epitomizes disharmony.

The crazies are the workaday version of the mosh pit. Our lives are out of control, and the only direction we have is the one given to us by the next activity that sends us careening toward another activity, and so on until we fall to the ground in complete exhaustion.

The remedy for the crazies is simple: leave the mosh pit. Gain fresh perspective by evaluating your list of loves. Ask yourself if you are doing justice to your loves, and plan to engage in activities that accomplish your priorities.

Balance is difficult to achieve and – like anything worth having – requires consistent effort. For the sake of healthy relationships with our co-workers, friends, and family, Butterworth suggests we run the race of life as a marathon, not as a sprint. When running a marathon, we should remember to pace ourselves and implement endurance strategies for the long haul, such as planning and recreation. Such strategies may eliminate the airport phone call that leaves you stunned and ashamed.

Chris Bosch is a researcher working out of CLAC's head office.

Israel ... continued from p. 10

Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on August 8 his approach was one of deference and admiration. This is the man who wants to wipe Israel off the map and recently addressed a frenzied crowd shouting "Death to Israel" and "Death to America." He heads a country that has lied about its nuclear program, has killed and imprisoned thousands of its own people, supports the Iraqi killers of American soldiers, while funding and enabling Hezbollah to kill and terrorize Israeli citizens. None of these facts were pressed by Wallace, and the two men got along fine, even engaged in some banter.

The tough interviewer, who would have roasted his own President Bush, gushed that he was much impressed by Ahmadinejad. This is despite the fact that Ahmadinejad had humiliated Wallace by keeping him waiting in a Tehran hotel for almost a week before he was allowed into the presence of this imperial president Wallace found

Ahmadinejad to be interesting and more rational than he had expected. What comes to mind is this question: Whose side is Wallace really on?

A long-standing bias. The mainstream media prides itself on its impartiality. The truth is that its bias runs deep, and it seems that an extreme form of contempt for their own country comes naturally to "liberal" journalists and commentators. They have shown a special attraction to the tyrants on the Left, and more recently for those who spew their hatred of the U.S. and Israel in the name of radical Islam. These enablers of tyrants are following in the footsteps of Walter Duranty, an admirer of Stalin in the 1930s, and Herbert Matthews whose favorable reporting on the young Castro helped to provide a cloak of respectability for another Stalinist Gulag.

An honest admission. Dan Rather, the retired CBS anchor ended his career in embarrassment when he used a fraudulent document to reflect badly on President

Bush's military service record. To his credit, Rather recently admitted to serious, systemic flaws in the way the major networks report the news. In an interview with Bill O'Reilly he conceded that what is missing in most televised war coverage is "context, perspective, background, history, and analysis." When asked whether some American networks "give moral equivalency to Hezbollah" in their reporting on the war in Lebanon, he responded:

I agree it happens. And I agree it's a problem. It's a problem that those of us in journalism have been reluctant to address. I do not exclude myself from this criticism. Reluctant to address that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization.

Radical Islam has declared war on the free West, but the West is internally so divided that it cannot agree on the real meaning of that declaration. That disagreement has now

reached a point where many influential shapers of public opinion treat terrorists as people who are fighting for a righteous cause.

Similarly, tyrants who cruelly enslave their own people and threaten to unleash a nuclear holocaust on the one democratic and civilized nation in the Middle East are treated as responsible, even respectable members of the international community.

I believe that this amounts to deliberate blindness toward an ugly reality. Unless such blindness is cured, I fear that Eric Hoffer's premonition mentioned at the beginning of this article may yet be realized.

The good news is that such a cure is available. But that will require, among other things, that the press become a reliable source of information rather than a propagandist for the Stalins and Hitlers of this confused and violent age.

Harry Antonides
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Ecclesiastes

We need quiet to reflect

*The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded
than the shouts of a ruler of fools.*

*Wisdom is better than weapons of war;
but one sinner destroys much good.*

Ecclesiastes 9:17

A. A. van Ruler

There have always been masses of people in the world. Our time with its huge population explosion is not an exceptional case. In every age people have been awed by the huge numbers of people around them. While each person sees himself as complete and unique, he is forced to acknowledge that there are many more creatures just like him. They are all human beings, persons, selves – each similarly complete and unique.

There is nothing objectionable about this from a biblical point of view. Our Creator appears to cherish multiplicity. He displays a certain generosity, extravagance and munificence. This is clear from the whole of reality. The universe is teeming with galaxies and milky ways. Nature gives us innumerable plants and animals. Similarly, history and society are filled with masses of people.

We can only be positive about this. In fact, it should fill us with secret delight. Anyone who embraces the doctrine of creation will, with the Creator, cherish multiplicity. He cannot possibly affirm only one thing – only himself, for example, or only God or only Nothingness.

But multiplicity also brings serious problems. One of these is that this multiplicity always contains fools. And one rotten apple can spoil the entire bushel. The foolishness of one person can be similarly contagious: it can make others foolish too.

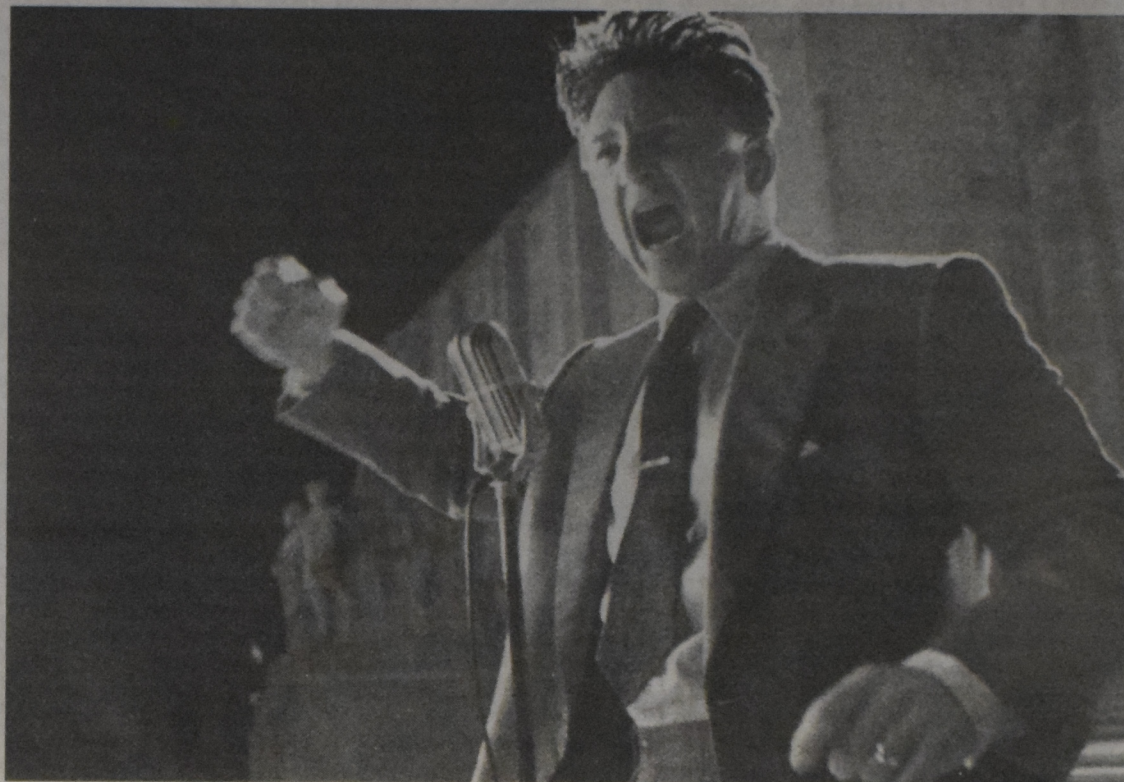
At times we get the impression that most people are fools – especially in the aggregate. Crowd psychology is very different from that of the individual. A throng of persons, a huge rally for instance, will react very differently than a single person. People can drive one another to foolishness.

But because there are so many people, we must find a way of living together. We form a community, a society, and this requires order. This presupposes the presence of leadership and authority. Authorities are necessary to decide what needs to be done. Otherwise everyone pulls in different directions or nothing at all happens.

But giving leadership and exercising authority is no small thing. It is always paired with a certain degree of power and even with the use of violence, even if it is only the violence of words. Leaders tend to shout to make themselves heard among the fools. They have no choice; otherwise they go unheard and they lose their influence over the masses.

Often this amounts to a great deal of fireworks with very little heat. It happens in nearly every gathering and organization. We need not necessarily think of Hitler, Goebbels and Goering, who led a highly cultured people to mass hysteria. Even in our own circles the person with the biggest mouth, the sharpest tongue, the most fanatical expression, the most extreme slogans and the most radical critique is often the one who gets the most attention. Even in our midst there is a lot of shouting by leaders and would-be leaders among the fools.

The sad thing is that in the process wisdom is often swept aside. We need calm to hear the words of the wise. There needs to be a certain amount of quiet for the words of the wise to penetrate, to get attention, to be considered and to lead to insight. Those who are completely swept along with the masses only hear the shouts of the leaders, and their lives are lost in the spiritual noise



Shuan Penn in All the King's Men.

and ruckus of society. This spiritual noise is a thousand times worse than the noise of the millions of cars and trucks on our streets and highways.

To hear, we need quiet and restfulness. Love cannot be one-sided. For love to flourish it must come from two sides. Otherwise, no love. The same is true of wisdom. It, too, cannot come from only one side. Suppose someone with great wisdom does appear and speak wise words. If there is no quiet so his words can be considered, weighed and taken to heart, nothing will happen. Wisdom will not take root in this world. The speaker of wisdom and the attentive listener are both necessary. They need each other.

To put it very plainly, wisdom comes from God. It is in his Word. It is meant for us. But God can't do anything in this world if we don't want to go with him. His rule, his kingdom, begins in us – in our quietness, in our attentiveness, in our piety. And if it doesn't begin there, it won't begin anywhere.

But there's another side to the issue. Not only must the words of the wise be attended to restfully, they must also be spoken restfully. Wisdom cannot be shouted from the rooftops. It cannot be violently hammered in. It can only be stated – calmly – trusting that the truth is true.

The truth is hardly something we can peddle door to door. The wise must not push their wares like a peddler, or a used car salesman, or a pitchman at a fair. They must display a certain absorption. They must be absorbed in the matter before them, in its truth, in the mystery of this truth. Someone who has become truly wise almost loses the courage to open his mouth. He remembers the saying that silence is golden.

But if he remained completely silent, he'd be neglecting his duty. The wise, those who know the truth, must speak it. It is their duty over toward their fellow human beings and over toward God. But then they must speak it humbly, simply and calmly. It should not surprise them, either, if hardly anyone pays attention.

When it does happen, namely, that the words of the wise are spoken calmly and are calmly heard in this foolish world, you might call it a miracle. Still, it does happen. The gospel, for example, has been proclaimed by the church in all its simplicity all through the ages. And there are always people who listen, who hear and who come to faith. Then they live by this faith and die by this faith, and it saves them. They rise above the noise and clamor of the world, above the shouting of the rulers, above the world of foolishness. That is all part of our liberation.

We would like this to go differently. As it is now, it often looks as though only a few individuals are saved. Only those who calmly listen to the words of the wise are liberated from the foolishness of the world.

We would prefer to see the whole world liberated from foolishness. Then the masses would no longer be swept along by the roar of opinion-makers, the power-brokers of the spirit. Then the words of the wise would make us all wise. They would benefit everyone.

Ah, if only all were wise
and wished each other well,
the earth would be a paradise
and not, as now, a hell.

This is what it comes down to: then not only would all people, and not just a few individuals, be saved, but our society, our economy and the state would all be ruled by wisdom and truth.

This is the vision that the Bible unfolds for us and stubbornly clings to. It is this world that is destined to become the Kingdom of God, even the political realm. But this is not the way things are now. So we must let the rulers go on shouting among the foolish.

Meanwhile, however, we must attempt to be quiet and attentive so that we can catch the words of the wise, the words of wisdom.

Christian living

Mbudi za ndokotora...continued from p. 6

In closing, let me share one more story. This same week on call, I was asked to see a medical patient who was in a coma from advanced sepsis. She came to us from a remote area in Southern Angola. Her illness started with a dental infection that later developed into an abscess and then spread into bacteremia (bacteria in the blood stream). By the time she sought medical attention; the infection had become very serious and was causing all her vital organs to fail.

She was not responding to antibiotic therapy and the medical team was losing the battle of trying to save her. I became involved when they discovered that she was roughly seven months pregnant and suspected the baby had died in utero. They wanted my advice on how to proceed with her care in context of this pregnancy.

To their amazement and mine, I was able to confirm that the baby was still alive. Now we had a dilemma. This mother was almost certainly going to die in the coming days despite our best efforts. If she dies, the baby perishes almost instantly. If we induce labor in the mother or do surgery to deliver the child, the mother will almost certainly succumb to the stress of delivery. Even if delivered, at the baby's present gestational age, it was doubtful whether she was mature enough to survive in Rundu, where there is no intensive neonatal care. We decided that the all we could do was to treat the mother aggressively and hope for the best.

The very next day, I was called

to the medical ward urgently. In the midst of a hectic day on that ward, the sound of a newborn cry was heard. Without any warning and while the mother was lying in bed unresponsive, a baby girl was born. She was bigger than we expected at 1.5kg and seemed as healthy as could be. We all stood there in disbelief. Her mother lay there comatose, unaware of the life she had just brought into the world. It was indeed miraculous. The baby's father had tears in his eyes and was grinning from ear to ear.

Together, this proud father and I gave thanks for this marvelous child. We then prayed that his wife would miraculously beat the odds and survive this critical illness. Sadly, she died only two days later. Her daughter, however, lives on and continues to astonish us all with her amazing progress. To this day, she continues to thrive in our infant nursery.

I was humbled and perplexed by both of these cases this week. On one hand, we have a mother that lives while her baby dies, largely due to our delays in delivering him. On the other hand, we have a mother who dies despite our best efforts, and her baby defies all odds by seemingly coming out of nowhere, when we least expected it.

Why was this baby's life spared so miraculously? Why did the other child have to die from something so preventable? There is no easy explanation. Maybe the question is not meant to be answered. Not in this lifetime anyway.

I am learning that there are just so many things that are beyond my control and understanding as I live and work in Namibia. But were the lives of my patients under my control in Canada? Perhaps those of us in the West live an illusion by thinking that we are in control and that we have all the answers. Do we really have such great influence over life and death – or is it just fantasy?

Conversely, why are so many people in Africa fatalistic when it comes to serious health issues? Many believe that it doesn't really make a difference what we do. Why make great efforts to urgently deliver a baby in

THE BE-WOWED-ATTITUDE

This past summer our family went on a vacation. We rented a cottage on a lake in Eastern Ontario. We piled the van with clothes, food, our bikes, books, games and a few toys. Our destination was a waterfront cottage that had a beautiful view of the large lake. When we just arrived, my four-year-old son stepped out of the van, looked at the cottage and said, "Wow!" Then he looked at the lake and said, "Wow!" He saw the boat. "Wow!" He saw that there was a canoe and out came another "Wow!" He ran to the lake and started throwing rocks into the water. "Wow!" accompanied every throw that produced any size of splash. Everything was a wow to him.

That night, I tried to think of what wows us adults anymore.

We as adults are usually wowed by tragedies. The recent shootings in Montreal cause us to say, "Wow, how can this happen?" We are wowed by corruption in our world, hate that is spewed by countries and by hurricanes and tornadoes.

My great-grandparents must have been wowed when the light bulb came to be discovered. In the 1870's the idea that light could be produced from a source other than the end of a candle or lantern was unthinkable until Thomas Edison performed the feat in 1879.

For my grandparents television must have been a wow. There weren't 24-hour news stations or 24 sports networks. There wasn't cable, pay-per-view or even color, but in those days televisions were big news. Those who were around then can remember that when someone in the neighbourhood got a television, it was a big event.

Computers definitely produced a wow. This past month marked the 50th anniversary of the first hard drive. It was September 1956 that IBM shipped the first unit of the RAMAC (Random Access Method of Accounting and Control) and set in motion a process that would change the way we live. It weighed a full ton, was the size of two refrigerators and each 24-inch disc held 4.4 megabytes of storage. The jump drive that I use holds more than 1000 megabytes (1 gigabyte) and is the size of my little finger. Times have changed.

But what hasn't changed is how children look at our world. I often swing my two-and-a-half year old daughter so that she flies through the air like an airplane. When I stop she says, "Do it again!" I do it again. I stop. She says, "Do it again, do it again!" She has yet to say, "Been there, done that, this is old hat."

Maybe that is part of what Jesus meant in Matthew 18 when he said, "I tell you the truth, unless

distress? If it is their time to go, it was meant to be and nothing we do can really influence that. This type of view is prevalent here amongst our hospital staff and patients.

Certainly, living in Africa where death is so much a part of life, changes one's perspective. When faced with tragedy after tragedy from a young age, many lose hope. But I have seen others walk

through catastrophe, and I have been inspired by their great faith. Not faith in human ability, like so many of us cling to in the West, but reliance on something greater than ourselves. It seems in a culture that witnesses daily tragedies, people either get drawn to fatalism or to the One who is sovereign over life and death.

In faith, I choose the latter and

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra



you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

In our church, we have a portion during the worship service where the children come to the front of the church and listen to the children's message. It is a priceless event. Sometimes our pianist will play "When the Saints Go Marching In," when they come down to the front; a fitting piece of music for the little saints.

When the children come, they listen to a story and are sometimes asked a question. Never have I heard a child answer a question with a personal agenda. They are honest. They are trusting and unassuming. They have never come to the front to complain about the length of the children's message. They have not mentioned that the church needs air conditioning or that the children's song is too contemporary. They have never complained about singing "Jesus Loves Me," a song that is 144 years old. They have never mentioned blended worship or worried about whether their female Sunday School teachers were equipped to bring them the good news of Jesus.

We can learn from these children that come unhindered to listen to the message and are wowed by it.

Mendelt D. Hoekstra is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, ON with Marisa and their three children.

put my trust in him. Many times, I am humbled when he shows me that I am not in control. Other times, I am privileged when he allows me to be his instrument of healing and hope. But at all times, I am sustained by his love.

His servant,
Ndokotora Rob



Psychology

On Hope

"Hope is not about things turning out okay. It is about being okay no matter how things turn out."

anonymous

Hope, we use the word in our daily language all the time. We hope the weather will be good tomorrow, and we hope that our friends will have a safe trip. We hope the test results will come back negative or that our daughter will have a healthy baby. The word hope is fully incorporated in our everyday speech and in our communication with each other. But what does the concept of hope actually mean?

Over the past twenty years, the meaning of hope has been extensively studied by researchers in disciplines such as theology, psychology and sociology. Hope has also been of interest to the helping professions such as medicine, nursing and social work. Hope is what it takes, among other things, to get people through the rough times in life. Hope facilitates healing. If we can quantify hope and figure out how it works, we can help people find it, and get better.

An Edmonton psychologist and researcher, Ronna Jevne, started asking questions about hope in 1986. Since that time she has written several books and authored many research papers on the topic. She was also instrumental in starting Hope House, a place where people needing hope can go for support, as well as a research centre. Jevne says it all started after she wrote a book about the cancer patients she had worked with as a psychologist. Her friends found it a hopeful book. They told her they saw the thread of hope that connected each story.

Jevne was very surprised by their comments because she had not consciously intended to write about hope. In such an almost naïve way she serendipitously stumbled on the concept of hope. This led to her passion to explore hope. At the same time she faced unexpected challenges in her personal life, adding to her need to understand hope and what it means.

Jevne says it is easier to describe what hope is not, than to capture what it actually is. Hope is not the same thing as compassion, faith, resilience, coping or expectation. A person may have all of these qualities, and yet not feel hopeful. As friends we can nurture these qualities and witness them to a hopeless person, but she may not respond with hope. Hope is not painting someone a word picture of a brighter future with options and possibilities. Neither is it visiting her every day or keeping in touch somehow. While hope may incorporate all of these qualities in one way or another, they are not the essence of hope. Hope lies deeper.

Clues about hope come from people who have felt hopelessness. To have been hopeless is what it takes to know the meaning of hope. Jevne warns people against speaking about hope, unless they have discovered

hope for themselves. Hope rises out of adversity. It is generated from within a person in response to a threat in life. Hope is claiming the meaning of a difficult experience. Hope is a seed that expands into a vision for a life in the future. Hope has gratitude in it. Hope is trust. The core of hope, says Jevne, is nestled in one's *being* and *living*.

One of the purposes of studying hope is helping people find it. Jevne says we need to begin by getting to know our personal view on hope and understanding how this view was shaped. Next we try *not* to impose that view of hope on to the person we are supporting. We also need to make sure our attitude is one of hopefulness. We have to listen a lot and explore what hope means to the other person. We need to validate her personal meaning of hope. We have to respect the process, however long it takes.

An appreciation of the goodness of small things can help someone find hope. Hope can be stimulated by our senses. For example, the smell of cinnamon buns can inspire hope, or the sight of fruit trees in blossom. Small things in life inspire hope in ways we could never guess. Hope can be found in warm banana bread and coffee with a muffin.

The March 1997 issue of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* carries a research article by Jean Spencer et al on the cognitive, emotional and spiritual aspects of hope. The purpose of this study was to discover ways to incorporate *hope work* in clinical practice. The article states that the development of hope in a person experiencing major life changes is a complex process that evolves over time.

In terms of a person's thought processes, it means exploring new possibilities for the future, using imagination and making choices. Emotionally, it means learning to set new limits in life, moving through despair and grief for what was lost, to discovering joy in new opportunities. Spiritually, it means knowing that life has meaning and that we are connected to something larger than ourselves. Helping people find hope has something to do with gently facilitating a new vision for the future, honoring the process, and engaging in the small things of life.

While all this talk and research about hope is helpful, says Jevne, in the end, the concept of hope can never fully be defined. Hope is always somewhat elusive, and remains a concept beyond words. The best we can do is to *commit* to it and *live* it.

Valuing the small things in life appeals to me as I think about the hope I have, and the possibility of passing it on to others. I could try to make more time for appreciating the fragrance of roses, and work harder at sharing that fragrance with others. I could bake something delicious and offer it to someone. I could be kind.

I think Jevne tries to get at that when she talks about her vision "that with every touch, every smile, every word, we know we enter a temple. A temple so sacred, so impressionable, so beautiful that every fingerprint leaves its mark." I can reflect God to others, as imperfect as I may be.

As always, there is an added dimension

to all this. What is the meaning of hope for addicts, homeless people, sex trade workers and parents and children living on social assistance? I don't have the answer, except for the hope in Revelations 22.

I close with a poem I received from Hennie Vanderveer who offered me hope when it was elusive.



Hymn of Promise

In the bulb, there is a flower
In the seed, an apple tree
In cocoons, a hidden promise
Butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow and winter
There's a spring that waits to be
Unrevealed until its season
Something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence
Seeking word and melody
There's a dawn in every darkness
Bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future
What it holds, a mystery
Unrevealed until its season
Something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning
In our time, infinity
In our doubt there is believing
In our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection
At the last, a victory
Unrevealed until its season
Something God alone can see.

Natalie Sleeth

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via e-mail at: vickyv@telus.net

Building Trust

Vicky Van Andel Ed.



Pastoral Excellence

Excellence is how we do things

Bob Zomermaand

I have been known to tease my artist wife that since we are going to some gallery or theatrical performance, *we are getting cultured*. We non-artists tell ourselves that since we don't have that artistic bent, culture is not for us. But, in actuality, the word culture refers to a very simple concept. Culture means how we do things together. In that sense, the concept is very important to all of us. *Getting cultured* by going to a gallery is engaging an artist's reflections on how we do things together. In fact, culture is a concept that is central to the understanding of ourselves as followers of Jesus.

Disciples of Jesus have certain ways of doing things together. The Bible itself challenges the ways culture and faith intersect. For instance, the Fifth Commandment says, "Honor your father and your mother" In Mark 7:11-12 Jesus remarks, "But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother." Jesus challenges the pious culture of his day when he corrects those who, in devotion to God, are unable to honor their parents with financial support. He declares that their religious cultural tradition contradicts the clear instruction of God.

Let me ask you, "What is your church's religious culture with respect to excellence in your pastor's life?" When we install a pastor in a church, we make a point of reminding the congregation that this person is a *gift of God* to us all. What can we do to nurture spiritual growth and pastoral skill development in those whom God gives us as gifts?

Two key cultural assumptions I have observed in churches are: (1) We assume that if someone has graduated from a seminary, he or she is gifted and skilled in every area of ministry, and (2) we assume this person will function well for decades to come with no further training, equipping, or nurture. We then are bewildered when the pastor finds preaching has become a burden, pastoral care is difficult, or the training of office-bearers just does not seem to come naturally.

Culturally, we in the congregation are hesitant to give the pastor time or funds to develop the gifts that are present or to acquire new skills that his/her seminary training did not impart. I asked a very successful businessman how he had kept his business going so well for over 40 years. He replied, "I find people who love what they are doing – customer service, repair, or sales – and then I send them to several weeks of training every year to keep them sharp!" But in the church culture of North America, we tend to squeeze all the living water we can out of the pastor's reservoir

without assuring that the springs of living water are also flowing into the pastor. When we have both, pastoral excellence will flow forth from God who gives it!

I am convinced that we need to develop a church culture that will enhance the capabilities of pastors. In the Christian Reformed Church, there is an office dedicated to the idea that we need to sustain pastoral excellence. This office encourages pastors to find unique and refreshing ways to build and sustain excellence in their lives. Our churches need to understand that pastors are human beings who are gifted for many things, but who are neither gifted nor skilled in everything.

I had a long conversation with a friend of mine named Bill who has pastored in several churches around Canada. In that conversation the following ideas emerged.

Although we had been in ministry for a combined total of almost 60 years, Bill and I were hard pressed to articulate a simple definition of pastoral excellence. The definition seems to reside in the mind of the speaker. Our agreed on definition is: **"Pastoral excellence is achieved when a pastor uses his/her giftedness in the best possible way for the glory of God to benefit all of God's people."**

Sharing the pastoral leadership role with others is something few of us are free to pursue. Bill had the idea of taking a team approach to pastoral burdens as they arise by forming a cohesive group of churches and pastors in a given geographical area. This would require us to rethink our cultural insistence on solo pastorates. Sharing the various skills of pastors among a group of churches would be far more cost effective than trying to staff a single church with all the different skills necessary for a local church to flourish. However, pastors and councils are often hesitant to share pastoral gifts since they fear loss of a congregation's identity with that pastor.

A church culture of pastoral excellence includes making sure that our pastors are nurtured spiritually. We need to implore God with our prayers for his living water to flow into the heart of each pastor. What if, in our churches, a few persons (or one person, if of the same gender as the pastor) were given the task of praying with the pastor once each week. What a ministry this would be! These people wouldn't be expected to be involved in any other ministry of the church, including the church council. (Relieving them of any other duty would show that how important this ministry of prayer is to us.)

We have to drop the old cultural line: *That's not how we do it here!* In its place we should look for some deeply biblical ways of sharing the ministry of the church. God gives gifts to all the people of a church, not just to the pastor. According to Ephesians 4:11 and 12, "It was [the Lord] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." Evidently, then, the Lord wants a church culture in which the pastor equips the whole congregation to do ministry. It's a sign of pastoral excellence!

My friend Bill says, "One of the key cultural issues in a church is the answer to a simple question: Do we trust one another?" A church cannot be a place of joyful service if the trust factor between pastor and church has run low or gone out. Trust builds a solid relationship in the hearts of the pastor and church which results in excellence. Only when a pastor is given the trust-filled room to flourish will that pastor actually do so. Until that trust is built and/or after it has vanished, pastors will more often be afraid of what may come than doing their best to excel in their work.



In conclusion, I would encourage all of you to ponder the culture of our churches – not just in our local churches but across the boundaries that we draw – and ask ourselves what in them saddens the Lord. How can we adjust our cultural ways so that we can be more in line with the revealed will of God for his church? There is always room for improvement. What might that mean in your church's culture?

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Reflections



Welcome to
my perch
Bert Witvoet

The politicization of truth enslaves

Earlier this year, protesters stormed the annual meeting of Citizens for Public Justice held in Ottawa, forcing the Canadian Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, Monte Solberg, to escape out of a back door. Solberg was to have been the main speaker for the meeting. CPJ is a public-justice advocacy group with strong roots in the Christian Reformed community. CPJ had planned a respectful dialogue with the minister regarding their concerns about Canada's refugee system. However because of the protesters, that opportunity was missed.

The disruption by rowdy protesters of what organizers had hoped would have been a peaceful exchange of views reminded me of a development in society that does damage to the search for truth. What we witnessed in this event was what one may call "the politicization of truth." The politicization of truth is a terrible problem in our world. It means that some people in our society constantly put up barriers and detours in front of others who are genuinely interested in pursuing truth.

Politicization is the process that turns the pursuit of truth into a power struggle. It occurs when the truthfulness of an issue is decided by partisan interests. Politicization kills honest debate. There is nothing wrong with doing politics. Politics has to do with the exercise of power. We need politicians to make decisions and enact laws. Politicization, on the other hand, takes the exercise of power too far. It reduces every situation to a struggle for power rather than a search for truth. Even politics should never degenerate into a politicization of truth.

Two examples

Let me give you two more examples of politicization that dominated the news. This summer the war between Hezbollah and Israel broke out. What bothered me about how this war was discussed at the United Nations and in many news media, was that the search for what was right and truthful often degenerated into the politicization of truth. For example, when Israel killed civilians it was called a war crime. When Hezbollah shot missiles into Israel, killing innocent civilians, it was considered self-defense. Why? One can explain such twisting of the truth only by seeing it as the consequence of the politicization of truth. Power blocs with self-interest at heart decided what was right and what was wrong, independent of international and moral standards.

The first casualty in politicization is always the truth. And the truth matters.

This summer I also read about the AIDS conference held in Toronto. Again, I was also struck by the politicization of truth. When philanthropist Bill Gates (he of Microsoft fame) mentioned at the conference that a program in Uganda that advocated abstinence and fidelity in inter-gender relations had been hugely successful in reducing the rate of HIV infections in that country, the audience shouted him down.

They didn't want to hear about a moral remedy for a social and medical problem. Any mention of abstinence as a way of avoiding HIV infection was considered heresy. Throughout the conference the success of Uganda in fighting AIDS was studiously avoided. The report of this shameful conduct on the part of the delegates to the AIDS conference angered me, because I felt that once more, the truth was trampled upon, was politicized.

This politicization of truth is all about power blocs who want to force their will on others. It's not about learning from each other, admitting the fact that we don't

know enough, and together finding the best way to solve the problems surrounding us.

Speaking half-truths

Fortunately, there are voices of truth that can be heard in the midst of this cacophony. I read in a news report that The Reverend Ohemeng Boakye, pastor in a Presbyterian Church in Ghana, advised Ghanaians to avoid unnecessary politicization in their discussions about human rights abuses that occurred during the military rule of the country. He said that the deliberate mix-up of truth with half-truths, errors and lies would only lead to the enslavement of the people. In a sermon to his congregation, the Rev. Boakye said: "As a people we should therefore, learn to accept our faults and guilt and stand by the truth at all times no matter the cost." This pastor from Ghana shows a deep understanding of how his country cannot heal from its many wounds if the people continue to tell half-truths and lies. He understood the power of truth telling. We need more voices like his to speak up for the truth. Whenever we politicize the truth, we reject God's promise that the truth will set us free.

Speaking the truth is easy when it favors us. Is it hard for you to admit that Canada's women's hockey team won gold at the Winter Olympics in Torino, Italy, earlier this year? But speaking the truth when it shows us less favorably is harder. Do you want me to mention how the men's team made out? Kids know all about avoiding unpleasant truths. They never started the fight. It was always that pesky brother or sister. Kids learn quickly how to politicize the truth.

We are often unaware of our tendency to politicize the truth. This is especially true in politics, in church fights, in family strife, in sport competition (the referee always favors the other side). Anytime there is something at stake, we easily fall into the trap of selective memory, telling half-truths, using statistics that favor our position. It's never an outright lie because no one will believe us then. It's always a mixture of truth and half-truths.

Truth in marriage

But when we politicize the truth, there is always a price to pay later. Think of marriage. How often don't partners engage in a power struggle? I have done it. I wanted to be right. Of course, if I wanted to be right, that implies that I must show without a shred of doubt that my wife was wrong. When you do that often enough in a marriage, the marriage begins to break down.

There was a time in our marriage, some 20 years ago, that my wife and I went for counseling. Why? Because there was a power imbalance in our marriage.

By God's grace and with the help of a Christian counselor, we were able to work on that imbalance and end up with a marriage that became richer and stronger because both of us learned to empower each other. In 1960 the form for marriage in the red Hymnal did not have those beautiful vows that you can now find in the Grey Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church. In the second form of the Grey Hymnal, the bride and groom promise "to serve [each other] with tenderness and respect, and encourage [each other] to develop the gifts that God has given [to each of them]." The new form recognizes that fact that truth suffers when there is a power imbalance in the marriage. The partners have to empower each other.

When a marriage becomes more and more politicized, the marriage will fail. Many marriages break down because of a power struggle between the spouses. When the marriage *does* break down, divorce proceedings can turn into an ugly battle for control and power. Now the gloves

come off. Couples can fight then over the kids, over possessions and over money. The end of politicization is always war. Politicization destroys community and the fabric of society. The politicization of truth in marriage leaves an ugly trail of broken relationships and confused and damaged children.

A spiritual matter

When our society becomes as thoroughly politicized as it is, we end up having to fight a spiritual battle. The lie is so pervasive in our society, that we often don't even realize that we are being misled. A heavy fog of half-truths hangs over our heads. And the very health of the church and society depends on whether or not we can see Satan's hand in this climate of power struggle and in the politicization of life.

However, when we turn to Scripture, we can find a way out of this spiritual morass. Psalm 119, for example, helps us redirect our thinking. What strikes us about this psalm is that the psalmist loves truth above all things. "Oh, how I love your law!" he sings out in Psalm 119. "I meditate on it all day long." Why does he meditate on God's law, on God's truth all day long? Because it makes him wiser than his enemies, even his teachers, and his elders, who presumably are not paying much attention to God's law. The psalmist continues: "I have kept my feet from every evil path." No doubt, he would consider the politicization of truth an evil path.

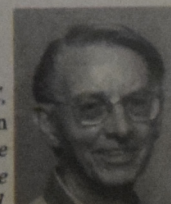
In this Psalm we find the first and most important step we must take as we face the struggle to not get caught in the politicization of life. The first requirement is a love for the truth. Because in our love for the truth, we show our love for God, who instructs us in the truth. No matter what the issue is in our personal life and relationships, or in society, whether it's abortion, gay marriage, social health care, the war between Hezbollah and Israel, Canada's refugee system — our first concern should be God's desire for truth.

The second step in avoiding politicizing truth is equally important. We must always act out of love. In 1 Corinthians 13 we are reminded that we only know in part, and that we must carry out our pursuit of truth in a wise and careful manner: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

Wow! These words sound like a marriage vow. I guess we were not without clear guidelines for marriage even in 1960.

If the first step, a love for the truth, focuses on our love for God, the second step of acting out of love focuses on our love for our neighbor. When we discuss an issue, we need to do so in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 13. We must always fairly represent those who disagree with us. We must not demonize the other person. Another reason why we should debate honestly and lovingly is that we only know in part. We can learn from each other to better understand that issue.

Bert Witvoet is a former editor of CC, retired, and now editing the Christian Educators Journal, preaching the occasional sermon and prodding the local Chr. School board.



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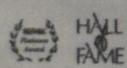
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Classifieds

Wedding

With joy and thankfulness to God,
Dick & Lucy Eigenbrood of Jarvis and Cor & Diane Visser of Cayuga
announce the marriage of their children

RUTH EIGENBROOD AND MATTHEW VISSER.

The marriage took place on Saturday, September 30, 2006
in the Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church of Jarvis, Ontario

Birthday – Alice Kater – See page 21

Anniversaries

Woodstock 1956 October 19 Harriston 2006

Thankful to God for his goodness to them, we are pleased to announce
the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents

HENRY AND DIANE TEUNE

To celebrate this event an "Open House"
Is planned for Saturday October 21/06

From 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

At the Harriston Legion – Maple Leaf Room
52 Elora St. Harriston Ont.

(Best Wishes only)

As children we pray that the LORD will continue to bless and keep them in
his care.

John & Kathy Teune – Michael & Jamie

Jim & Teresa Teune – Kyle, Trevor, Kevin, Tara

Elisabeth & Art Rekker – Aaron, Ryen, Nicole, Natalie

Harold & CJ Teune – Jacob, Noah, and Zachary

Home address: RR#3 Clifford ON N0G 1M0

Anniversaries

Simcoe – October 20, 1956 - 2006

With joy and thanksgiving to God we wish to celebrate our parent's **50th Wedding Anniversary**



HENRY AND LENA EISING (nee Hofland)

Love from your children and grandchildren:

Judy Eising & Ron Groenenberg – Tim, Kate, Guelph

Sandy & Theo Brunsting – Terri, Matt, Joe, Belleville

Lisa & Eric Slofstra – Steven, Stephanie, Simcoe

To celebrate we will have an **Open House** at their home

Saturday Oct. 21, 1-4 p.m. (Followed by a family dinner.)

814 Cockshutt RR#5, Simcoe ON N3Y 4K4

519-4284607

eisinggh@simcom.on.ca

In lieu of presents

our family would appreciate donations to the Canadian Food Grains Bank or CRWRC

Brampton, Ont. 1956 October 13 Georgetown, Ont. 2006

As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15b

With thankfulness to God for his unfailing mercies,
we wish to announce the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents

JACK AND JANE FOKKENS (nee DeBoer)

God has blessed them in their life together, and has made them a blessing and examples of faith to their family.

We were pleased to celebrate with them Mom's **70th Birthday** on May 21, 2006

and Dad's **75th Birthday** on Sept. 25, 2006.

Open House

to be held at

19 McIntyre Cresc.

Georgetown, Ont on

Fri. Oct. 13, 2006

from 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Best wishes only, please.

Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren.

Henriette & Paul Thompson – Eric, Adrienne, Laura, Georgetown, Ont.

Janet & John Geertsema – Aaron & Carrissa, Janelle, Katelyn, Kelly, Barrie, Ont.

John & Karen Fokkens – Micaela, Brent, Bryan, Luke, Telkwa, B.C.

Karen & Andrew DeBeer – Mark & Jennine (fiancée), Leah, Sarah, Barrie, Ont.

Ingrid & David Flikkema – Devon, Aidan, Maya, Brampton, Ont.

Home address: 19 McIntyre Cresc Georgetown ON L7G 1N5

With praise and thanksgiving to God, we announce the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of



JOHAN AND MAATJE VAN ELBURG

on October 17, 2006

*I lift up my eyes to the hills –
where does my help come from?*

*My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1,2*

Jenny & Henry Mol, Thunder Bay, Ontario

Kevin, Robert, Gary, Brian, Derek

Marianne & Archie Nugteren, Beaver Dams, Wisconsin

Erica, Leah, Lynden

Joanne & Tim Pasma, London, Ontario

Christopher, Robert, Daniel, Lauren

Gerald & Tammy Van Elburg, Thunder Bay, Ontario

Joey, Devin

Fred & Julie Van Elburg, Thunder Bay, Ontario

Jared, Adam, Jordan, Kara

Correspondence: #412 - 145 Fanshaw St

Thunder Bay ON P7C 5Y4

Obituaries

Psalm 103:17

JACOB MEINEMA nee Krottje

Peacefully went home to her LORD and

Savior on Sept 13, 2006 at

Caressant Care in her 90th year.

Beloved wife of her late husband John (2003)

Loving mother of:

Elmer & Linda, Listowel ON

Clarence & Teena, Innisfail AB

John, Listowel ON

Jake & Anne, Warman SK

Nell & Alfred, Cornwall ON

Henry & Val, Red Deer AB

Peter & Jeanette, Warman SK

Bob & Debbie, New Hamburg ON

Ron, Red Deer AB

Paul & Myra, Saskatoon SK

Connie, New Hamburg ON

32 grandchildren, many great-grand-

children, 1 great-great-grandchild.

Predeceased by daughter Greta McMullen.

Correspondence: Elmer & Linda Meinema

424 Elma E, Listowel ON N4W 2E5

**MAARTJE
VANDEN DOOL**

On Sept 11, 2006

the LORD suddenly

called home Maartje

in her 77th year.

Maartje is now celebrat-

ing with her husband

John (predeceased 1975)

in the company of her

very dear friend and

Savior Jesus Christ.

She will be greatly missed by her children:

John, Simon (Shirley), Helena Nyland (John) and

MaryJane Mazzacato (Michael)

and will be sadly missed by her grandchildren:

John Jr., Jessica, James, Stephanie (David), Nathaniel,

Matthew, Sean, Rene, Bryan, Ally, Michael and Helena.

And if I go and prepare a place for you,

I will come back and take you to be with me

that you also may be where I am. John 14:3

Correspondence: H. Nyland,

67 Sixth Concession E, Millgrove ON L0R 1V0



*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the
crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous
Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to
me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*
2 Timothy 4:7 & 8

We are sad to share that God took unto himself his
child, my loving spouse, caring mother and oma. We
are thankful for the love and nurture she provided.

HENDRIKJEN (HENNY) GERRITS-HUTTEN

Gramsbergen

October 5, 1937

Centreville, Nova Scotia

September 5, 2006

Gerhardus (Jack) Gerrits

Joanne & Eric Gates

Jonathan (Eve) Shannon, Hannah

John & Jill Gerrits

Jessica, Amanda, Shane, Weston, Shane

Arlene & Stephen Harbers

Sharon & Everett MacPherson

Ceildh, Kristen, Rebbecca, Cameron

The memorial service to celebrate her life was held

on Saturday, September 9, 2006, at the Kentville

Christian Reformed Church.

Mailing address: Mr. Jack Gerrits, RR 2

Centreville NS B0P 1J0

**MARTJE (Martha) SNIP
nee Nienhuus**

passed peacefully into the arms of her

LORD and Savior at Shalom Manor,

Grimsby Ont. on Wednesday,

September 20, 2006 in her 91st year.

Treasured and loved wife of the late

Klaas (Clarence) Snip (1995)

Beloved Mother of:

Tena & Gerry Evers of Wainfleet

John & Cathy Snip of Dunnville

Gerald & Rika Snip of Lethbridge AB

Ernie & Marjukka Snip of Simcoe

Ed Snip of Lethbridge AB

Carl & Grace Snip of Coldwater

Annette & Kerry Fluit of Grimsby

Michael Snip (Sylvie) of Toronto

Much loved by 16 grandchildren and

12 great-grandchildren

Predeceased by one great-grandson.

Funeral was held from Grace Reformed

Church at Dunnville Ont on September 23.

"By Grace Alone"

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Met vriendelijke groeten

Birthday



Happy 75th Birthday to our Mom and Oma on October 10

Alice Kater (nee Bakker)

From all your children: Theodore (Cindy), Sylvia, Jerry (Beth), and James (Kari) and all your grandchildren:

Alaina, Vanessa, Karl, Michelle, Jennifer, Rebekah, Nathan, and Jonah.

We love you and are grateful to God for all the years of blessings he has given us in you. We pray for many more!

Correspondence: #110 - 1415 Upper Wellington St, Hamilton ON L9A 5E8

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Chairman, Principal Search Committee
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Lethbridge AB T1J 4P4

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Email: benchmark@shockware.com

Committee "Netherlands Bazaar" Christmas Food Parcels

The Christmas season will soon be upon us and once again the Committee Netherlands Bazaar is depending on your co-operation to successfully identify those families who will receive a Christmas food parcel. If you know of any family of Dutch extraction in Ontario, in extreme financial circumstances, we need to hear from you before **Thursday, November 16th, 2006**. Our registered charitable standing was granted on the condition that all recipient needy families were of Dutch extraction.

Please note that we must have specific information in order to send the appropriate food parcel, such as name(s) of recipient(s), address, contact person, ages of children, as well as the reason for aid. Also the telephone number of a contact person who can verify this information and the signature of the contact person are required. **All submitted names will be kept in strict confidence.** The families who received a parcel last year will **not automatically** receive one this year. We require confirmation of their current circumstance. If you have questions, please contact: Ge Spaans 905-477-1243, Jannie Thomas 416-498-8706, Anne Mol 905-713-1323, Greta Niemeyer 416-222-2087

Please forward information by November 16, 2006 to Mrs. G. Spaans, Committee "Netherlands Bazaar", 15 Pavilion Street, Unionville ON L3R 1N8. Your assistance in reaching these Ontario families in real need is very much appreciated. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Ge Spaans

N.B.: The date of next year's Bazaar is September 29, 2007.

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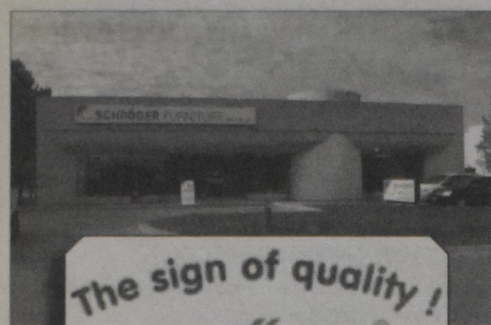
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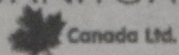
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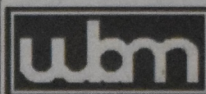
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Oct 19, 20 First annual Christian Stewardship Services** planned giving conference and membership meeting. For details see website: www.cssservices.ca
- Oct 21 Day of Encouragement** – Celebrating our God while becoming equipped for ministry. It is an opportunity for all deacons, elders and all other church members to be encouraged, inspired and trained for service. It happens at Hamilton District Christian High School in Ancaster. Theme: Come to the Water. Choose from 49 workshops and 15 Service Sites. Cost \$50. Contact your deacons for a registration form or contact Diaconal Ministries at (905) 336-2920. More details are available at www.diaconalministries.com.
- Oct 27-29** Hamilton District Christian High School 50th anniversary weekend. For information about activities or to register as alumni: www.hdch.org or 905.648.6655
- Oct 29** Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Henry DeBolster will be preaching.
- Nov 8** The 2006 Annual *Church and Charity Law* Seminar Hosted by: Carters Professional Corp. 8:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. at Young-Nak Korean Presbyterian Church, 650 McNicoll Avenue, **Toronto**, Ontario. Cost: Early Registration fee is \$15.00 per person (includes GST). \$20.00 after Nov 1.
- Nov 10** Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Bowmanville** Rehoboth CRC. 8:00 p.m. Contact: L. Hellinga at 905-623-6943. See details in ad below.
- Nov 11** Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Trenton** CRC 7:30 pm. Contact: S. Bach 613-965-6618. See details in ad below.
- Nov 12** Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Newmarket** CRC 6:00 pm. For further information contact Harold de Haan 905-389-2104 or Rev. Arie VanEek 905-689-5266.
- Nov 15** Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Hamilton** First CRC 8:00 p.m. Contact: A. VanEek 905-689-5266. See details in ad below.
- Nov 17** Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus **Chatham** First Presbyterian Church, Fifth St. 7:30 p.m. Contact: H. Hystek 519-351-0684 See details in ad below.
- Nov 18** The Lighthouse Annual Fundraising Dinner and Silent Auction at Villa Colombo in **Toronto** Reservations Required 416-535-6262
- Nov 19** Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus with duet: Michael & Laura Pin. **Drayton** Reformed Church, 7:30 p.m. Ambassadors Contact: E. Walter 519-638-2953.

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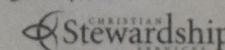
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News

Outnumbered African force to stay on in Darfur

African Union troops extend their stay for three months as world looks for other solutions

Howard LaFranchi

WASHINGTON — The people of Darfur won't be totally left to their own devices amid marauding militias and the Sudanese government's bombing campaign, now that the mandate of the African Union force — originally set to expire next week — has been extended through the end of the year.

But Sudan's acceptance of the three-month extension may turn out to be just a fig leaf as the government continues its fight against rebels, and pro-government militias pursue deadly harassment of civilian populations in the vast region, US officials and other experts say. If the Sudanese government accepted an extension of the AU mandate, they add, it is because the undermanned and outgunned African force has been largely ineffective at curbing the violence — violence the government has stoked over past weeks.

The goal of the international community continues to be deployment of a larger and

better-equipped United Nations force to Darfur. But with the government of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir balking, getting the already-approved UN force on the ground will take even more intense international pressure, analysts say — including from China, which has extensive commercial ties to the energy-producing country.

"Extension of the African Union force is a positive development, because without that we faced the prospect of hundreds of thousands of people with absolutely no defense," says Marie Clarke Brill, acting co-executive director of Africa Action in Washington. "But that can't let the international community off the hook: Either they move ahead quickly to get the UN force deployed, or countries find another way to get peacekeeping forces on the ground."

This week President Bush signaled Darfur as a top priority of his administration, naming former USAID administrator Andrew Natsios as his special envoy on the conflict,

and hinting at support for international intervention even without the government of Sudan's support.

Still, international pressure has focused on China, which has interests in Sudan's energy sector and is seen by some as holding a key to President Bashir's acquiescence to a UN peacekeeping force. But some analysts, noting that China has abstained in Security Council votes on Sudan but not vetoed action, say Beijing may have gone as far as it will on pressuring Sudan. They say the onus remains on the US and the Europeans to press for a peacekeeping force.

"It's really time for the US and the European countries to move beyond simply what they've been saying and start putting some measures in place," says Sally Chin, a Horn of Africa analyst with the International Crisis Group's Nairobi office. "Ideally this action would be UN-wide, but if it's not going to be, then there has to be some kind of coalition for the willing."

Analysts say the African Union force of about 7,000 soldiers has been no match either for the vast terrain of Darfur, a region the size of Texas, or for the Sudanese government's forces — which between government troops and pro-government militiamen are thought to number about 22,000. The approved UN peacekeeping force would number 22,500.

One danger on the horizon is that the international community will take the African Union's mandate extension as breathing space, but Ms. Brill says deployment of a UN force would have to be decided in the next "days or weeks" if a security vacuum in Darfur is to be averted. "Deploying a large UN force takes several months, so this decision is something that has to happen quickly if we aren't going to be right back at the same situation at the end of the year," she says.

She agrees that if the UN ends up unable to enforce its peacekeeping resolution, then interested countries should act on their own.



Displaced children in refugee camp.

Among the ideas on that track: tough financial sanctions against the government of Sudan, and enforcement — perhaps by NATO countries — of a no-fly zone over Darfur to stop Khartoum's aerial campaign against what it says are rebel positions.

Experts estimate that at least 200,000 people have died in Darfur, while more than 2 million have been left homeless or forced to flee to neighboring countries. The Bush administration labeled the Darfur conflict a "genocide" two years ago.

As important as deploying a peacekeeping force may be, some experts like Ms. Chin say it shouldn't be allowed to overshadow the faltering peace agreement. "With all the attention on the UN efforts, the peace process has been pretty much abandoned," she says.

Bush's naming of a special envoy could keep the attention on the peace process, experts say. "It's a very positive step to have someone representing the president who is full time on this," says Chin, "and can take up things beyond the necessary temporary measures to long-term solutions."

Howard LaFranchi is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

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